

As a duly elected representative of one of your largest Homeowner's Associations (HOAs) I understand the need to update the zoning ordinances after nearly 40 years of changes in construction methods, products available, and housing needs throughout the county. At the local level, we periodically change our Architectural Board Review (ARB) regulations to account for these kinds of changes. However, it is my firm belief that, as the current Zoning Ordinance Modernization (zMOD) is being presented to the county residents, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and Planning Commission (PC) are encouraging the destabilization of the HOAs, Civic Associations, and those residential areas without representation. That said, I urge you to vote NO on approving zMOD until there is more consideration of the problematic portions of the current document.

However, there are several major policy changes for both Accessory Living Units (ALUs) and Home-Based Businesses (HBBs) have direct infrastructure impacts - such as on over-crowding in schools, over-taxed infrastructure, traffic congestion, and the potential negative impacts to water quality and storm water management, etc. - that have not been adequately considered by staff and the Clarion and Gartner consultants who advised the county on zMOD. Additionally, the expanded use of "administrative approval" unfortunately opens up the county for abuses by residents who will "play the margin" and take advantage of the lack of monitoring by the county. The natural course of things - and the most likely result - is that neighbor will be pit against neighbor who had no idea the ALU or HBB was being established and will have little recourse during the violation or after the fact to make acceptable changes.

As an alternative for the future, many of the zMOD changes are updating the current disconnects between the ordinances and the needs of the county. Simplification of the complexities and misunderstood ordinances should receive review at a minimum of every 5 years. While it appears, this has not been done in the past 40 years, I would encourage you, the BOS and PC, and their respective staffs implement a review cycle every five years to make timely and minimalistic changes.

As mentioned repeatedly during the PC meeting last week, I fail to see the urgency (and legal authority) of pushing through a document of this magnitude when there are still significant sections to be vetted and tighten. Pushing through a change of this depth and breadth without meaningful citizen understanding and input lacks transparency. The "100 public outreach" efforts notwithstanding, it is apparent that there is a significant portion of the county that still has not heard of zMOD. It could be that citizens have not been able to make zMOD a priority during the pandemic, the way that the staff has done. It could be that citizens are finding sections in zMOD that are clearly more than an enhancement, and wondering what else they might have missed in this multi-hundred pages? It could be apathy - let someone else worry about it. I will quote from the Gartner report and their own Vision Statements and Elements, which I assume the county has adopted, "Maintaining a meaningful participatory role for County residents." Also, "Providing high-quality services that ensure public safety and create desirable places to live, work, and play." I believe that the current action of the BOS and PC to push the ordinance amendment through currently fails to support either of these vision statements.

As I read and listen to the concerns of citizens county-wide, I continue to believe that premature approval will have long-lasting, negative, and unintended consequences, not least of which will be citizen trust of and faith in our local governance. Now more than ever, we do not need that. Hit the pause button on zMOD. At a minimum, separate the controversial amendments that negatively impact the backbone of the county - specifically the Homeowner Associations, Civic Association, and those residential communities not represented by either.

Respectfully,

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President
Virginia Run Community Association