

**2009 FINKSBURG PLANNING AND CITIZENS' COUNCIL
COMMISSIONERS SCORECARD**

Subject / Title	Grade	Rationale	How to Improve
Planning and Managed Growth	C+	The rate of growth seems to be reasonably managed although the economy has done much to hurt the construction industry. The quality of development has improved as evidenced by recent construction including Smoker's Barbeque, the Finksburg Library and Walnut Park Plaza. However, with the lack of progress on the county-wide master plan and the Finksburg area plan, planning seems to be reactionary rather than visionary.	Resume the process of working on an acceptable Master Plan and Finksburg Plan and incorporate the design guidelines that FPACC submitted to the county.
Zoning	D +	The creation of the Gateway Renovation Tax Credit provides a significant incentive to stimulate a much-needed revitalization of the Md. 140 corridor through Finksburg. However, permitting automotive service centers (and other intensive commercial uses) in the neighborhood business zone (BNR) was a major mistake that may result in serious adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods, not just in Finksburg, but throughout the County. Also, zoning enforcement needs improvement, particularly with respect to responding to illegal signs.	The Commissioners need to listen to the communities' concerns on the BNR zone. Zoning enforcement needs to be stepped up in particular on illegal signage.
Master Plan/ Finksburg Plan/ Design Guidelines	F	The Pathways Plan process included a successful kick-off conference, extensive public participation, including grass roots meetings, and a visual preference survey. However, the plan process has been stalled for 1 ½ years. The Finksburg Plan effort began with community meetings in 2000. Now 9 years later there is not even a draft plan to review. FPACC drafted a set of design guidelines for the Md. 140 corridor and submitted them to the county in 2006 for review and approval. The guidelines also have been stalled. This lack of progress on the master plan updates and the design guidelines demonstrate a lack of serious commitment by the commissioners to provide a strong blueprint for future growth and development at the county and at the local level.	Resume the process of working on an acceptable Master Plan and Finksburg Plan and incorporate the design guidelines that FPACC submitted to the county.
Finksburg Gateway	D +	The Gateway Renovation Tax Credit represents a good beginning to revitalize and enhance the Md. 140 corridor through Finksburg. However, after years of discussion, meetings, and promises there is still no local area plan, no design guidelines, and no welcome sign. Despite the self-initiating and voluntary design work of the new Walnut Park Plaza, the "gateway" remains an eyesore and an embarrassment to the community and the County.	Engage the business community and seek input from the community at large. Begin immediate efforts to engage the business community in the application processes of the "Gateway Tax Credit."
Library	A+	Wonderful! Years in the making and the Library was still able to maintain an excellent design and the "Green" features have made this a benchmark for future municipal buildings in the county, state and country. The Library Board, Director and Staff have been phenomenal to work with and have gone out of their way to become a community beacon.	Will need to look at expanding the parking.
Open government	B-	It is appreciated the way the county is recording its public meetings on the Internet. Some meetings are held in inopportune times for the general public to attend. The general public is still unsure why there are many closed door sessions.	Consider using flex hours for county employees, from 12 PM to 8 PM instead of 9AM to 5PM to allow for public hearings in early evening.
Responsiveness to Council and Public	C-	This one has been inconsistent depending on the commissioner. Commissioner Zimmer is very responsive and generally explains his point of view. Commissioner Gouge was noted in the survey as most responsive and has supported the council. She has even helped us secure speakers at the last minute.	Replying to citizens emails goes a long way towards open government and responsiveness to the community's concerns.
Roads	A	The county crews have been terrific, responsive to snow removal and road repairs. They are very professional and friendly when in the neighborhood. It gives us a sense of pride noting how the Carroll County roads are better kept as we cross our county lines.	We realize how difficult it is to maintain the level of service during these difficult budgetary times.
Environment - Waste Management & Recycling	C	The Carroll County Commissioners created a nine-member Carroll Environmental Advisory Council to promote environmental policies. There are some who say the EAC doesn't hold much power. One of the major decisions by commissioners was to join Frederick County in constructing a waste to energy facility to convert 1500 tons of trash each day into electricity. The facility will be built in Frederick County. In May Carroll County became the first county in Maryland to approve an ordinance to issue wind turbine permits. There have been 24 applications for wind turbines at last report.	More cleanup of the county's roads by inmates or county workers, or more awareness by county residents not to pollute and throw trash along roadways. A lot of trash near landfill has been noticed recently. More effort by county and residents to recycle should be encouraged.
Parks	B	Consensus was parks were in good shape except that we wished there were more.	Need to improve the condition of some fields and better turf management.
Billboards	D +	Consensus was that the county has put restrictions on new, big billboards but they are still an eyesore.	Sign maintenance! Force billboard companies to cleanup waste and remnants after changing ad. Consider amortization of current leases as they expire. Institute stringent guidelines on electronic and "LED" signage before this gets out of hand. Pass the Finksburg Plan with the suggested design guidelines that FPACC has submitted to the Planning Dept. 2 years ago.
Law Enforcement	C	The commissioners have allowed an adversarial relationship to develop between state police and the Sheriff's department. Efforts to bring a county police force to Carroll were responsible for much of the damage. Some residents say when calling 911 they get shuffled around between state police and sheriff's department and aren't sure who is going to help them. The state police force does a good job providing law enforcement to the county, although residents feel that Finksburg has been a low priority. They have been proactive in the community and schools. The BOC should be applauded for keeping the Resident Trooper Program. However, several citizens felt that they have been left out of the discussions regarding a county police force.	The commissioners need to encourage citizen participation in order to assure transparency in the process.
Fire and Emergency services	A-	The volunteer companies are excellent! Gov't could learn to do so much with so little! There is concern over the volunteer services ability to maintain the increase in demand.	County should increase its funding to help the volunteer and paid firefighters and personnel. Be proactive and aware of response times for fire and emergency services.
Watershed	A-	The Commissioners are to be applauded for ratifying the current Watershed Protection Agreement and taking bold measures in crafting stringent regulations stiff methods to encourage innovative site planning & design when it comes to storm water runoff and management.	Continue strict site planning and design and encourage a more proactive approach to storm water management among all citizens.
Schools	B	CC Public Schools are excellent considering the lower level of per student funding than our neighboring counties. Many parents don't like that the closest middle school is located in Hampstead and children have to travel far.	Keep schools a priority in these difficult financial times. Reconsider continuing forward funding school construction. A more cost effective and economical approach needs to be considered from the stand point of redistricting and better utilization of existing facilities (expansion, renovations etc.).
Land Preservation	A	The Carroll County Land Trust and the county ag preservation program are to be commended for their strong approach supporting the county's goal of preserving 100,000 acres of agricultural land.	Continue to explore and expand the innovative financial models that the county ag preservation program has recently begun to use.