

South Kent Island Public Sewer Project Support Statement Commissioners David Dunmyer and Bob Simmons

We were pleased so many County residents testified before the County Commissioners during the May 1 hearing on the South Kent Island (SKI) Public Sewer Project and the implementing legislation. That testimony validated the community support for the Project, as previously reported in the survey the County commissioned, and reinforced our support. Our support is founded on the project's benefits to the Bay; to the public health; to growth management; and to our citizens' economic well-being.

A passion for the environment, particularly to improving the health of the Bay, compelled us to run for County Commissioner. As Commissioners we have regularly joined environmental groups in vigorously opposing projects which we felt would damage the environment and the quality of life in Queen Anne's County.

The environmental benefits of the Project are compelling. By hooking 1518 septic systems to public sewer, the Project reduces nitrogen infusion into the Bay by 17,300 pounds annually, which is one-third of the County's septic system nitrogen reduction goal. The Project also permanently stops raw sewage from failing septic systems from percolating onto the ground and into waterways. At the hearing, we heard compelling testimony of the prevalence of this unacceptable condition, which not only damages water quality, but also exposes residents to disease. No one can seriously question the health dangers exposure to this raw sewage presents, particularly to children at play outside.

It was heartening to us that so many citizens testifying in support of the Project, premised their support on an obvious passion for improving the quality of waterways. This passion is shared by the Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC), who we have joined in opposing other projects, but which testified in support of this project.

MRC staff scientists and attorneys conducted a thorough analysis of the Project before concluding its support was justified. We commend MRC as the only environmental group to offer testimony based on such a thorough analysis. Its position was obviously free of the unfortunate political motivations often underlying other testimony.

It was reassuring that much testimony acknowledged our perspective that the Project limits growth, rather than promotes it. Based on past history no more than 560 lots of the 1600 in the project area will be developed. The State insists that there be ironclad restricted access in the agreement for the County to secure needed State funding. Further development will be greatly constrained by the septic law, soil conditions, and existing preservation easements, meaning after the Project the area will largely remain "as is." The testimony of vacant lot owners complaining about the restricted access documents the strength of these limits.

Witnesses testified about suffering property values and heart-wrenching situations where home sales have fallen through and where residents must now use holding tanks at great expense. Without the Project these burdens will only escalate, ultimately resulting in a huge degradation of the community. We cannot let this happen.

Testimony revealed frustration with the decades of conversation by former County leaders. We are proud to now support a viable permanent solution to this longstanding problem.

QAC Commissioners David Dunmyer and Bob Simmons