

July 5, 2022

Rebecca Horner, Deputy County Executive
5 County Complex Court
Prince William, Virginia 22192

Re: PW Digital Gateway/ Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 2021-00004
Need for County Responses

Ms. Horner:

Our client, Gainesville Citizens for Smart Growth, has serious concerns about an apparent lack of transparency on the part of the Prince William County Planning Office.

This Planning Office has made insufficient to no reply to stakeholder letters, going back to November 2021, requesting information or action related to the Prince William Digital Gateway Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

We note that a few minimal responses appear on the County's project website under the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), updated on March 28, 2022. However, the responses are inadequate to address the numerous issues our client and other stakeholders have raised regarding the CPA's impacts on the following:

- Occoquan Reservoir Water Quality
- Chesapeake Bay Water Quality
- Sedimentation and Erosion of the Watershed
- Manassas National Battlefield Park and other Historic Properties
- Conway-Robinson State Park
- Deforestation of habitat of local fauna, including threatened and endangered species
- Damage of pollutants, heat islands, noise, and other industrial by-products
- Roads and other infrastructure

One explanation could be the lack of staffing, as indicated in the FAQ response to question two regarding public comments "... our office does not have the capacity required to put all public comments online."

If limited staff capacity to make a thorough response is the reason, then we assume there is also insufficient staff capacity to make a carefully considered recommendation about the CPA.

This explanation would be in line with the May 12, 2022, article in the *Prince Williams Times*, "Data show Prince William County is on track to overtake Loudoun in data center development." The article demonstrates the County seems unsure of the Data Center resources that already exist and are in development. This awareness gap could be from staffing shortages, which limit the Planning Department's ability to keep track of the many Data Center applications in process and the total square footage already approved.

If inadequate staffing isn't the reason for the County's limited response, a more alarming explanation is a specific intent to block public awareness of details of the Data Center developments. It could indicate an intent to wall off aspects of the planning process from broad public understanding.

Such an intent would raise alarm bells for many in Prince William County, extending well beyond the Gainesville Citizens for Smart Growth group.


This appearance of a possible intent to block public awareness comes as Prince William's environmental quality, heritage integrity, traffic safety, and livability could be negatively impacted for generations to come by changes to the Digital Gateway Comprehensive Plan.

In other words, the lack of transparency displayed by this office comes at a time when transparency is most needed.

At this time, we are presuming no ill intent on behalf of the County. If staffing limitations are causing the issue—or if there is another reason for this lack of adequate response—we ask for an immediate written statement to this effect with assurances of how the County will transparently and thoroughly address citizen concerns moving forward. We ask that your office respond by July 19, 2022.

We appreciate your attention to this and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Edward L. Donohue

cc: Fairfax County Water Authority
Virginia Department of Agriculture
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Virginia Department of Forestry
Virginia Department of Wildlife
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
National Parks Service
US Army Corps of Engineers - Norfolk District

enc: County FAQs Updated March 28, 2022
Prince Williams Times article, "Data show Prince William County is on track to overtake Loudoun in data center development."