

To: Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership
From: Ellen Moyer, Mayor City of Annapolis, 2001-2009

Comment on Chesapeake Bay Agreement

Hello, I am Ellen Moyer, past Mayor of the Capital City of Annapolis and current community volunteer on State and Local Boards and Commissions.

At one time I was also an appointed member and Chair of the Local Government Advisory Board to the Chesapeake Bay Program. It is my experience with LGAC that I want to share with you because I believe it reflects why we can say "after 30 years that non-binding efforts have failed".

Advisory Commissions at most levels of government are frowned upon by professional staff. Most, not all staff, do not want to be bothered by citizens who do not understand best management practices. They simply take so much valuable time to nurture. And staff are already overburdened.

But in a representative government as we have in this country, it is the energy and engagement of the citizenry that insure that "good things happen". In the environmental arena that means big bucks for a variety of major infrastructure changes and enhancements.

Big bucks are Out of my pocket dollars. Dollars I do not want to part with ...unless of course I have a personal interest in the issue. And there is the rub.

Despite the efforts by many to engage citizens, in well controlled, special environmental programs, over 30 years we have failed to engage an army of volunteers in doing small and affordable things to Save the Bay. We do have an energized core...a regiment size maybe, but not an army. If we had, we would not have a battle over storm water utility fees. We would have a loud and vocal majority demanding it.

When I chaired LGAC, an advisory committee of elected local officials, seeing ourselves as resources to the Program, we recommended an outreach effort that would engage us talking with peers in the 100s of small towns in the watershed not now engaged in the Bay Program. By the way, at the time, a very low percentage of local governments were doing anything related to save the bay initiatives. We wanted to talk about the small and inexpensive things towns could do to engage citizens in the doing. And we volunteered our time for this outreach.

What would those things be?

Allow me to brag a bit on Annapolis. Decades ago the city created an Annapolis Conservancy. It is or was a public urban land trust, the only one in the Nation. It's goal is to conserve land by gift in development areas and it offered an opportunity to a builder to take an IRS benefit for the land so gifted. Over the

years within the 7 square mile area, the city has acquired 200 acres of small open space natural habitat parcels that has saved marshes and trees. It didn't cost anything to do except for a brochure to describe it . volunteers supervise it. A simple program that if magnified by the number of towns along the Bay could retain valueable natural habitat.

In 1980, Annapolis passed a tree canopy protection law. Over time the tree canopy grew to 42.% the highest in 2006 of any urban area in the State. And it involved an aggressive tree planting program. The State Provides trees at little cost and businesses like to sponsor trees. Some years we planted 1000 trees. The more trees and the more people engaged in planting them the better. Why? because now as a volunteer I am invested. As the years go by I can watch my tree grow.

As for a storm water utility, we instituted a nickel a day for the bay in 2003. No one complained. Nary a peep was heard.

And than we fostered a "take a deep breath " initiative shared with elementary school children in the City and County.

There are many creative ways to move forward on the little things that don't cost an arm and a leg. As an elected leader I was invited to join with 50 other Mayors active on environmental issues in Sundance , Utah. Believe me there are exciting model examples of community citizen environmental involvement programs around this nation that can be adopted in our watershed.

Now I know you may be rolling your eyes and thinking get on With the important stuff. Well in my experience you can't get to the big stuff with the needed collaboration and cooperation with your partners without the energy of an army of citizens who are engaged in "digging in the dirt" in ever increasing numbers and with increasing frequency. Once they do they are committed and the measures suggested in the partnership, the legislation, the budgets , become easier and more frequent to achieve.

What happened to our suggestion to be active Bay ambassadors? We requested 8000\$ to cover travel expenses to meet with and engage local governments and their citizens in the doing. It failed. One of the partners to the South of Maryland didn't know what we would say. They didn't trust us.

This attitude is too often the response given to advisory committees. Some one recently described advisory boards as step children government staff would like to get rid of despite the potential they offer as a valueable resource of donated time important to achieving the goals for environmental enhancement .

The citizens are your advocates.

If you want to get to the top of the necessary program implementations an army of engaged citizenry is required. The Chesapeake Bay program has failed in partnering with the people in meaningful ways. It

hasn't brought enough of the public along with it.

And now mandates are required.

However in the temper of the times, more regulation will push the public kicking and screaming over every initiative. With the opt out provisions of the current proposal , collaboration essential to bay clean up will fail. The next thirty years will be the same as the first. As long as community organization and personal outreach is shelved there will be minimum improvements .

So I suggest to you that an active outreach program that touches the many with achievable low cost programs that excites and energizes an army of volunteers is essential to achieving clean water and clean air goals.It should become a written way of work in the proposed plan throughout the Bay Watershed.