

Advocates for Herring Bay

November 24, 2015

Honorable Steve Schuh
Anne Arundel County Executive
The Arundel Center
44 Calvert Street
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Mr. Schuh,

Reducing the number of LED streetlights by the wetlands in Fairhaven would be a “win-win” for county taxpayers, residents, and local wildlife. As discussed in more detail below, strategic adjustments to the lighting in our area would allow the county to avoid the unnecessary expenditure of \$1,000 to \$2,000 a year while benefiting the robust populations of birds, amphibians, and other wildlife in the Herring Bay watershed.

Background on Fairhaven. The neighborhoods in Fairhaven are located between Herring Bay and a forested area known as the Trotts-Branch/Herring Bay Greenway. Our shoreline, wetlands, forests, and meadows host more than 130 species of birds, about 30 species of amphibians and reptiles, and myriad pollinators, butterflies, and other flora and fauna. Our communities were subdivided in the 1920s, during the era of the model-T and dirt roads. As a result, our neighborhood streets are narrow and many of our homes are set back just a few yards from the street and from one another.

Trends in Lighting Levels by Our Wetlands. Before the recent upgrade, there were six working streetlights on the segment of Fairhaven Rd. adjacent to the estuarine wetland known locally as the Cove. Now there are 9+ LED streetlights that illuminate the quarter-mile stretch of roadway between Revell Rd. and Herring Ave. (see map). The combination of more and brighter streetlights—LEDs are two to three times brighter per watt than mercury or sodium-vapor lights—has significantly increased lighting levels by the cove.

The county has not yet replaced the streetlights on Genoa Ave. That road



bisects a healthy wetland that serves as breeding habitat for at least seven species of amphibians: spring peepers, southern leopard frogs, pickerels, green frogs, tree frogs, American bullfrogs, and American toads (see image on the left below). The light on that pole currently does not work.

Balance Among Community Objectives. Now that the county is using LED lights, it may not need to maintain as many lights as it did in the past. Our electric poles were installed 70 to 80 years ago, so it's unclear whether their number or location is appropriate for the future. We urge you to reassess the streetlights sited by our environmentally sensitive areas, keeping in mind the following considerations:

- **Protecting public safety:** We drive on these small country roads every day, and our children catch the school bus at the intersections along Fairhaven Road. Like Goldilocks, we want just the right amount of lighting: enough to ensure our safety, but not excessive amounts that may distort drivers' perceptions or encourage loitering late at night.
- **Preserving existing wildlife habitats:** Numerous scientific studies have shown that artificial light can interfere with the migratory, breeding, and foraging behaviors of certain birds, amphibians, insects, and other wildlife. In Fairhaven, higher lighting levels could disrupt the populations of tundra swans and other waterfowl that spend the winter in the cove and creek (see middle image, below); the many species of marsh birds that breed in the reeds in the wetlands, including Clapper rails, Virginia rails, green herons, American bitterns, least bitterns, marsh wrens, and red-winged blackbirds; the osprey that nest above the cove and creek; the amphibians whose breeding behavior requires darkness; and the numerous insects that support that web of life but rely on darkness for their mating activities, such as lightning bugs.
- **Curbing wasteful government spending:** As taxpayers, we want our money spent effectively. The annual operating expense of a single streetlight may be small—it's our understanding that each pole costs about \$300 a year—but every dollar adds up. Why pay for lights we don't need for decades to come?

Preliminary Recommendations. Although we are not traffic engineers, we believe that the number of streetlights by Fairhaven's wetlands could be reduced without jeopardizing public safety. We have three specific recommendations:

First, reduce the lighting along the cove. We are especially concerned about the five lights along the 650-foot stretch from the south side of the bridge to Clagett Avenue (see image of that area on the right below). The lights there reflect off the concrete bridge and seawall, which amplifies



the illumination in an area that is used by waterfowl and other birds. Similarly, we probably do not need three LED streetlights within 200 feet of each other from Fairhaven Rd. and Howard/Weems Avenues. Removing three of the lights in this zone would save the county close to \$1,000 a year.

Second, do **not** replace the broken light on the pole in the middle of the Genoa wetland. Putting a LED light in that location would impair the amphibian breeding activity there.¹ The community has functioned well without a light on that pole, so spending \$300 a year for a new lamp is unnecessary.



Finally, please heed the requests of individual residents whose living rooms and bedrooms are brightly lit throughout the night by the new LED streetlights. Reducing the lumens or removing lights would save taxpayers money and help those neighbors get a good night's sleep. It also would help lower the total ambient light along Herring Bay.

We recognize that our request for changes in a few streetlights will not balance the county's budget or have as dramatic an effect on wildlife as New York City's "lights out" initiative during birds' spring and fall migrations. Small though this is, it is an opportunity for us to work together to ensure that Anne Arundel County has the most effective and environmentally and fiscally sound programs possible.

Thank you for considering our views. Please contact Paul Rensted at [REDACTED] if you have any questions or to follow up on our concerns.

Sincerely,
The undersigned residents of Fairhaven, Maryland:

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|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Denise Bello | Mike Brewer | Sharon Brewer |
| Joe Browder | Jack Brumbaugh | George Demas |
| Suzanne Demas | JB Deerin | Catherine Dooley |
| Louise Dunlap | Mary Ann Filipkowski | Carolyn Garis |
| Kathy Gramp | Kristen Griner | Wes Groves |
| Ardith Harle | Jim Harle | Joe Hasuly |
| Maureen Hudson | Lou Hyde | Kim Jones |
| Bill Lambrecht | Peter Legg | Emily Manders |
| Darlene Marashlian | Steve Marley | Sandra Martin |
| Gail Martinez | Keith Mayes | Kim McCaig |
| Mark McCaig | Peggy McCaig | Kelly McGarvey |
| Barbara Miller | Theresa Mills | Jim Muell (continued) |

¹ See, for example, B.J. Baker and J.M.L Richardson, *The Effect of Artificial Light on Male Breeding-Season Behavior in Green Frogs*, NRC Press, December 5, 2006.

Undersigned residents of Fairhaven, continued

Kelly Myers	Nancy Oliver	Paul Rensted
Robert E. Poole	William P. Poole, Jr.	Gail Schneider
Barbi Shields	Birgit Sharp	Ron Sharp
Barbara Smith	Jim Smith	John Smith
Scott Smith	Steve Smith	Lynn Strauss
Manfred Strauss	Doug Vansant	Sarah Vansant
Jane Walter	Mike Zuralo	

Courtesy copies of this letter are being sent to: Councilman Jerry Walker; Senator John Astle; Delegate Seth Howard; Chris Phipps, Director, Department of Public Works; Erik Michelsen, Administrator, Watershed Protection and Restoration Program; Mary Lamb, Department of Public Works; and Michelle Corkadel, Community and Constituent Services.