

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

For immediate release

May 2, 2006

**PLANNING BOARD CHAIRMAN BERLAGE
TO WITHDRAW APPLICATION FOR REAPPOINTMENT**

After informing members of the Montgomery County Council, his colleagues on the Planning Board and agency staff, Montgomery County Planning Board Chairman Derick Berlage issued the following statement today:

“I have withdrawn my name from consideration for appointment to a second term as Chairman of the Planning Board. I have reached this conclusion after long and careful thought, and after consulting with many community leaders, friends and family members.

While I could make a very persuasive case for reappointment to a second term, there are other factors to consider -- and those factors have persuaded me to withdraw my application for reappointment.

First, a new chairman will help to give the Park and Planning Commission a fresh start. Second, it is essential that we get the best qualified field of candidates for this critical county position, and that is most likely when there is no incumbent in the field. And finally, by today’s announcement I make it possible for me and the agency I lead to focus all of our attention on reforming our development review process without the distraction of a lengthy reappointment debate.

Of course reform has been our focus for nearly a year now, and the transformation of our agency is well underway. I am proud of the progress we have made and look forward to devoting my remaining time as chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board to achieve even more results.

We already have completed nearly half of the 62 reforms we promised the community last fall. We have recruited a first class Parks Director and we have a first class individual performing the duties of Planning Director as well. The Planning Board, our two Directors, and our entire staff are working around the clock to make Park & Planning a model of accuracy, accountability and public transparency.

I thank the many community leaders, colleagues and agency staff who helped in guiding the agency through a tumultuous period. During the past year, Park and Planning has continued, with little fanfare, to produce creative master plans, run first-class parks and recreation programs, and successfully review and regulate hundreds of building projects. The Montgomery County community can have confidence in the work Park and Planning does. Enormous confidence.

When we have fallen short, as we did in Clarksburg, we have owned the problems and we have fixed the problems. But rest assured that our successes outnumber our failures by about 10 to 1.

I will continue to serve, and serve with enthusiasm, until a new Chairman takes office. Thereafter, I look forward to finding other ways to give back to the community that has given me so many opportunities to perform public service - opportunities for which I will be forever grateful. I will not, however, entertain any discussions about future employment until my term is concluded.”

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