

Michael C. O'Connor
Mayor



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FREDERICK

MAYOR'S OFFICE

Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 16, 2021

LETTER OF SUPPORT HB0399 - REAL PROPERTY – REQUIRED NOTICES FOR CONTRACTS OF SALE – ZONES OF DEWATERING INFLUENCE

Dear Chairman Smith,

The City of Frederick supports HB0399. There are approximately 134 properties in the City of Frederick that lie within the Zone of Dewatering Influence (ZOI) as designated by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) in 2000. When first identified and mapped, property owners received written notification from MDE that their property was in the ZOI. However as of this writing, Maryland SDAT records close to 115 of those 135 have transferred at least once. No required notice by owners exists for purchasers of property in the ZOI.

Several sinkholes have occurred in the City of Frederick within the ZOI. At least two of these have impacted residential properties. Last summer, a whole house collapsed into a sinkhole. Fortunately, it was unoccupied at the time. The house next door to the south also became unstable leading to condemnation and ultimately demolition of the home. The house on the north side sits on a parcel in an affordable housing land trust with Habitat for Humanity.

Sinkholes are a real concern in the ZOI, and property owners who purchased after the initial designation should be afforded the opportunity to have that information, to assess it prior to purchase, and to acquire adequate insurance if purchased. A required disclosure to potential purchasers would provide this crucial information.

The City of Frederick urges you to vote in support of HB399.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor
Mayor