



Government Update



ADVOCACY

advocacy@coastalrealtors.org



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Wicomico County: Health Department Update

Wicomico County has been without a wet season since FY24, which has stalled many land sight evaluations. The Health Department monitors the county water levels regularly, but without reaching the threshold for a wet season, land sight evaluations are limited.

On April 17th, the County was granted permission from MDE to begin an “Alternative Testing Pilot”.

- Homeowners who have the oldest land sight evaluation permit applications will receive a letter in the mail to opt into this program.
- This alternative testing allows for soil and land evaluations outside the traditional wet season.
- Thus far, 24 homeowners have been contacted, with four land evaluations being completed.
- Homeowners are being reached out to by the Health Department, if you or someone you know has had a land evaluation application open for a prolonged period of time, they may be receiving notice from the Health Department about this program.

There are 177 open applications for septic replacements since FY23.



Wicomico & Worcester: Moratoriums

After much community pushback, both Counties have enacted a temporary moratorium on the construction of data centers. The State has indicated that it plans to adopt legislation regarding data center zoning next year. It is understood that an outright ban would be illegal, and with the State's data center study to be published September 1st, 2026, this gives local leaders time to tailor regulations to their jurisdictions. Expect more work on this in the coming years.



Salisbury – ADU and Data Center Text Amendments

- City staff are preparing zoning text amendments for data centers, which under current code provisions are an acceptable use in their industrial districts, and for ADUs. Zoning text will be available at their meeting in August that will be accompanied by public comment before going to the Mayor and Council.
- After this past work session, the ADU ordinance will contain the provisions set forth by the State, be limited to owner occupied properties, and not to exceed 75% of above surface living space (which the state law was not clear on).
- The current ADU definition in Salisbury will be eliminated and replaced by the State definition, thus removing the 500 sqft cap on size and lot size requirements.

Ocean City– ADU Text Amendments

- Ocean City will be having a work session next Tuesday at 1PM to discuss ADUs in the town. Nothing has been posted on their website that has any specific provisions being entertained by the town, but I intend to attend to see where the conversation lands.
- After leaving work session, ADU text amendment in the Town will need two regular work sessions (and public hearings) before adoption, thus putting Ocean City on a good pace to complete this work before the Oct. 1 deadline.

Berlin – ADU Text Amendments

- Berlin intends to discuss its ADU policies in the August Planning and Zoning meeting.
- At this past week's meeting, Berlin Planning and Zoning gave final site plan approval to Phase One of a two phase plan to revitalize the area around Heron park in town. This Phase includes a medical office building and a small commercial business park.

Crisfield – Investor Day

- Crisfield has \$330 million dedicated in projects for the next several years, including a new hospital, several townhome and housing projects, upgrades to the marina and more!
- This comes after the town's eagerness to work with the private sector, and there's been several success stories of the town granting zoning changes to incentivize this development.
- Additionally, the FEMA flood resilience funding has been restored, and improvements to flood infrastructure are coming. Crisfield is going to be applying for more money soon for similar projects.

Special Session

Synopsis

HB2100 passed the General Assembly and was signed by the Governor this past week amending the Maryland Constitution to clarify there are different standards when drawing Congressional districts and state legislative districts. A 2022 Court of Special Appeals (now the Maryland Supreme Court) established the two were held to the same set of standards following a lawsuit filed after the General Assembly passed new Congressional maps in 2021.

Impact

With the 2022 decision presiding over Congressional maps, the Senate President prevented maps drawn this past Session from leaving the Senate Rules Committee, given that they likely would have been litigated and ultimately struck down. This past Session's map divided MD-01 (the Lower Shore's district) and connected the southern portion to as far west and north as Columbia in Howard County, a violation of the understood requirement that districts must be compact, contiguous, and be comprised of residents of a shared community.

If the voters approve this constitutional amendment, those listed requirements would not apply to Congressional districts, thus making any future maps abridging the Eastern Shore to Western Shore population centers legal and likely.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

Resort and Second Home Committee Meeting

This hour-long meeting began with changes from HUD regarding condos then shifted into a panel with two consultants used by NAR regarding short-term rental regulations. Many of the issues CAR has faced in the past have been issues other associations have faced. The consultants worked largely in the Southwest and the Mountain West regions. “Changing neighborhood character” and “disruption of the local way of life” were common statements the consultants had heard. As a part of their services, they do “deep dives” into housing data, and in the regions, they’ve worked in, have found that property values and homeownership rates had largely remained unaffected by the advent of online booking platforms.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

Total Cost of Homeownership: Sustainability Roundtable

This hour-long session broke attendees into small groups of about eight. There were questions to guide the conversation such as “what are issues facing homeowners in your area” or “what are some unique strategies used in your jurisdiction to increase homeownership”. At my table were a few from the Midwest, New York State, and the Southeast. Energy costs continued to be brought up as a challenge for homeowners, as well as septic / sewer access as most were from rural areas.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

GAD Briefing on Federal Issues

This was hosted by NAR's advocacy team, with Joe Harris serving as the facilitator of the dialogue between the House and Senate chief lobbyists. The panel had went over some of the priority legislation this year, like the "More Homes on the Market Act". They had described the process of finding sponsors from both parties to better advance the legislation. Despite bipartisan support from legislators, the panel repeatedly stated how "weird" this session of Congress was, and how little movement there has been on any legislation.

Advocacy Scoop Live Podcast

This episode of the Advocacy Scoop Podcast largely revolved around the current legislation before Congress, and how NAR intends to have it passed. Also, a celebration of Homeownership month.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

NAR RPAC Management System: Best Practices & Fundraising

This session was led by the Aristotle team and walked attendees through the processes of using Aristotle. It was largely basic and introductory information, like how to build a list and how to generate RPAC reports. Some of the later information about setting up events was useful.

State & Local Issues Mobilization Support Committee

I only caught the last thirty or so minutes of this meeting as the presenters were wrapping up. As someone who has gone through the process of receiving Issues Mobilization grants from NAR, some of the information regarding the process of applying for funds was a bit redundant.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

Government Affairs Directors Meeting

Two consultants gave a presentation before an open mic in front of the State and Local GADs. Their background was in AI, and how to use AI in campaigning and political fundraising. With the advent of AI, and popular AI videos, notably from the recent Mayoral election in Los Angeles. With that, the potential for using AI for political purposes has become more and more popular, and with a lack of Federal oversight on the matter, anything is possible for their industry.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

Government Affairs Directors Breakout Session

This session was reserved for questions and answers, where GADs from across the county with an issue can present it in hopes that another GAD has had a similar issue, and a possible solution. The first half was all about AI and Data Centers. Following that, a question about adopting building codes, which some jurisdictions seem to be behind on doing so as Maryland and a few of our jurisdictions have had building codes for a while. Other questions were about an eviction moratorium and property tax increases.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

FPC Lobbyist Salon – Senate

I'm not an FPC but I thought it would be interesting to attend to hear what's going on with the Senate. The sentiment was again that things are moving slowly and it's been a difficult environment to navigate.

Opportunity Zones 2.0

This panel was comprised of someone from the National Association of Counties, the Lobbyist for Henry McMaster of South Carolina, a partner of CGCN Group, and a policy director for the Economic Innovation Group. Opportunity Zones are available to local jurisdictions, largely geared for rural areas, to kickstart public and private investment in historically uninvested areas. Examples of this locally are the eastern side of Berlin, Princess Anne, Crisfield, and the West side of Salisbury.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

Meeting with Matthew Arthur from Representative Harris's office

Maryland had no scheduled hill visits this year, rather, Maryland Realtors will be scheduling in-district meetings. However, word of the "no hill visit" rule didn't reach the Eastern Shore in time for RLM as Terrence, Dee Dee Miller, Kevin Waterman, and myself made our way to Andy Harris's office to chat with the office's Senior Legislative Assistant. This meeting occurred outside the scheduled Hill Visit time and we were able to meet for about 20 minutes.

FPC Roundtable

I wanted to sit on the FPC Roundtable to get an understanding of how other States and Associations navigate Federal issues.

NAR REALTOR Legislative Meeting Summary

NAR Arello Liaison Meeting - Information Exchange

This was genuinely the most informative session of the whole conference for me. ARELLO is the Association of Real Estate License Law Officials, and this session had MLS executives, Real Estate Lawyers, Fair Housing Officials, AI regulators, and more speak about their expertise. This was such a broad reaching session. The AI regulator importantly brought up the issue of using AI for real estate purposes, but not engaging in a conversation on the impacts data centers have on homeownership. This really touched on so many great topics, from continuing education to an MOU that Maryland Realtors has signed with the State. My only gripe is that this session is in the middle of Hill Visits, and had we not met with Andy Harris's office the day prior, I wouldn't have been able to attend.

GOLDEN R	CRYSTAL R	STERLING R	STERLING R (con't)	PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE
Grace Masten	Tim Arnett	Veronica Bishop	Joni Martin Williamson	Grace Masten
	Lauren Bunting	Joe Brach	Mia McCarthy	Bernie Flax
	Kevin Decker	Kate Deckenback	Mac McGraw	Austin Whitehead
	Bernie Flax	Bilonna Dilling	Steve Parsons	
	Darron Whitehead	Jay Doaty	Carol Proctor	
	Joe Wilson	Diana Dovel	John Rego	
		Cameron Drew	Jenny Sheppard	
		Bethany Drew	Leslie Smith	
		Greg Erdie	Frances Sterling	
		Kim Heaney	Brigit Taylor	
		Debora Hileman	Mike Weisner	
		Hunter Isaac	Austin Whitehead	
		Chris Jett	Jessica Ziegler	
		Brandon Johnson		



MD REALTOR LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP

[Click here to view the Sine Die report from MR](#)

[View more here.](#)





Comptroller and DHCD Housing Update

The Maryland Comptroller, Brooke Lierman, presented her office's Housing portion of the State of the Economy, [linked here](#).

In it are key findings pertaining to Maryland's housing economy, including an acknowledgement of the 100,000 unit shortage in the state, potential reasonings behind that shortage including rising costs of materials and labor (Maryland cost of building exceeds the national average), stagnant permitting (neighbor states and states with high growth outpace Maryland in single-family and multi-family permitting), among other data points.

One analogy the report draws is to the Smith Island Cake, where the process to obtain the necessary permits to development is similar to our Somerset attraction's layers of cake and fudge.

Suggestions include expanded townhome zoning, residential development in commercial zones, ADU implementation, building code reform, among others. Certainly an interesting read and I'll have a summary of it next week!





DHCD Housing Needs Assessment for 2026

[Click here to read the full assessment.](#)

DHCD put their housing needs assessment out this past week – here are a few key takeaways:

- Maryland needs about 590,000 new housing units by 2045 to meet projected demand
- The cost burden for renters has increased from 33% since 2000 to 46% since 2022.
- Homeownership is increasingly out of reach for moderate-income households; only 49% could afford the median home in 2022, down from 75% in 2000.
- For every 1,000 renters earning 0–30% of Area Median Income (AMI), 610 affordable homes are missing.
- The lower shore has an average of 20% - 55%+ of its renters are cost burdened.
- Total annual permitted units has been halved since 2000.

Maryland's housing shortage is multifaceted, and DHCD will be bringing forth legislation this Session to remedy the worsening inventory shortage for our state. This is a very interesting read and I'm happy to discuss further!

