"Councilperson Clueless"

You know her as District 6 incumbent Cathy Bevins.

Hi, everybody. This is the first of a two-part article. It's a story about an incumbent member of the Baltimore County Council who makes important stuff up as she goes. Nothing personal, mind you. It's just business, the business of government. It's about whether or not the incumbent deserves the right to be re-elected.

At a Council working session in 2012, Councilperson Bevins was explaining Bill 76-12 which has to do with the rezoning of the Middle River Depot property. We'll talk more about that in the second article. During her comments, she asserted that the development of this property would generate "hundreds of thousands of jobs."

That's great. Unfortunately, it's also ridiculous. Think about it. For the sake of discussion, we'll call it "The Super Walmart Solution" or "TSWS" for short.

"Ta-da!" Impressive, isn't it. Factoid: In 2013, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. made a profit of $17 billion. That's over $46 million a day. Wow.

Think of the zillions of dollars and heartache President Obama could have saved the American people if only he and his advisors had known about Councilperson Bevins' TSWS. All the President needed to do was put a relatively small number of Walmart Supercenters at key locations around the country and we'd have been back to full employment in no time.

Admittedly, this may sound harsh, but that's how the truth reads sometimes: The fact is, Councilperson Bevins has no idea what she's talking about. According to her own Baltimore County government website, as of 2010, the "Total Employed Civilian Population 16 Years And Over" was 402,467. That's for all of Baltimore County, but, somehow, this one development is going to produce "hundreds of thousands of jobs"?

Okay, maybe she misspoke. It happens to all of us, especially to professional politicians who spend too much time talking and not enough time actually doing stuff. The odds are against you. The more you talk, the more likely you are to misspeak. So let's give her the benefit of the doubt and ask her the following question:

Ms. Bevins, "In the comprehensive impact studies on which you have based your efforts to rezone the Middle River Depot, precisely what **net** effects do your analysts estimate the Walmart Supercenter and other Middle River Depot developments will have on District 6 employment and business?"

Wait. ...That was unfair of us to ask. Why? Because it was a trick question. It was a trick question because there haven't been any comprehensive impact studies. Because Councilperson Bevins has been winging it. As for all the numbers she's been throwing around about how this super-duper Walmart at the Middle River Depot is going to be God's gift to the District 6 economy? Well, unfortunately, she's been making them up as she goes.

By comparison, our hero, **Jeff Beard**, believes that "faking it" is no way to represent the people. **Jeff** believes that, if you don't know something, say so – and then talk to professionals who actually know what they're doing, find out the answer and tell the people whose jobs, income and quality of lives are on the line.

To be clear, there have been no comprehensive impact studies of the Middle River Depot – and that includes the "Martin State Airport MARC Station Study" published in July 2010 by the Maryland Department of Transportation.

The DOT report is not an impact study, but it does make an interesting point that apparently Councilperson Bevins has never bothered to read. Had she read the report, she might have been discouraged by this language from page 14…

"The retail market is weak and oversupplied; indeed, the local market is experiencing net negative absorption."

To be fair, there are qualifications to this statement, it's not all bad news and this was 4 years ago. That said, what's clear from this and other language in the report is that no responsible authority, with the best interests of her constituents at heart, should have encouraged the development of the Middle River Depot – for any purpose – without having first conducted a thorough, comprehensive impact study.

At best, Councilperson Bevins' support of Middle River Depot development has been premature.

Bottom line, she has no objective, no social-scientific basis for encouraging the development of the Middle River Depot. It is a purely political decision, no doubt

encouraged by those who have promoted and continue to support her career on the County Council.

Councilperson Bevins has also been telling people, repeatedly, that the Walmart Supercenter will be breaking ground in August. This August. Hm. Will somebody please ask her how she knows that? Because we checked with the County's office for "Permit Processing" and they couldn't find any building permits for the Middle River Depot property for Walmart or anyone else for that matter. No building permits. No environmental impact study. No public testimony one way or the other. Zip. So how does she know when Walmart is breaking ground, or is August just wishful thinking?

By the way, see the picture below? It's a photograph of a 4' x 8' campaign sign attached to the fence that surrounds the Middle River Depot property that Councilperson Bevins had rezoned to encourage Walmart to put a Supercenter there. If you look carefully to the left of the tree, you can see the words "Middle River Depot" on the rusted metal of that structure. Let's talk more about the rezoning in the second article in this series that we'll post in the next few days.

This picture is interesting for two reasons. One is that symbolizes the very special relationship between the incumbent and the owners of the Middle River Depot property.

The other reason isn't something you can fully appreciate unless you're actually standing there. Those buildings in the background, that were used to build planes during World War II? **THEY'RE HUGE!** They're gigantic and are protected, some of them, as historic properties.

We don't know exactly what Walmart has in mind – precisely where on the property it intends to put its Supercenter or what, precisely, needs to be done to prepare the property, physically and legally, in advance of its building there, but Walmart couldn't be ready to break ground on that new store in August if their lives depended upon it. And that's assuming that building there is really something they're still planning on doing anytime soon. The next time Councilperson Bevins tells you Walmart is breaking ground in August – August 2014, presumably – please ask her how she knows.

FYI, Councilperson Bevins rezoned the Middle River Depot property for the specific purpose of enticing Walmart to build a Supercenter there on August 6, 2012, 21 months ago, when Bill No. 58-12 was approved by the Council.

We prefer the kind of responsible development that **Jeff Beard** will champion when we elect him to the Baltimore County Council – "responsible development" that is based on the best urban planning and economic impact analysis that's available. There's too much at stake for all District 6 families – and businesses too – to politicize something as important to all of us as economic development.

And you know what else? Jeff Beard will always tell you the truth. And that may just be the best reason of all to vote for him.

Beginning with early voting on June 12 and then on election day, June 24, you have a chance to greatly improve the integrity and effectiveness of your representation on the Baltimore County Council.

All you have to do is vote for **Jeff Beard.** It's that easy.

Stayed tuned. Part 2 of this series will be on-line at our campaign website, www.Jeff**BEARD**2014.org, in a few days. It's really, really interesting.