

MINERAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the law which governs planning and zoning for most local governments, including Easton, requires that Comprehensive Plans include a plan element on mineral resources. The purpose of this element is basically three-fold. First it is to identify undeveloped land that should remain undeveloped until the land can be used to provide or assist in providing a continuous supply of minerals (as defined by another state law). Second, this element should identify appropriate uses for such lands following the extraction of the identified minerals. Finally, this element should incorporate land use policies and recommendations for regulations to balance mineral extraction with other land uses and, to the extent feasible, to prevent the preemption of mineral resources extraction by other uses.

BACKGROUND

Previous Comprehensive Plans in Easton have devoted little attention to mineral resources. The 1989 Comprehensive Plan includes one paragraph that states, among other things, that surface mining of mineral resources does not take place within the Town of Easton and that no potential mineral resources have been identified within Easton. While the former half of this sentence may be true, the latter is not.

There is, in fact, at least one and possibly two, mineral resources located within Easton. Map 8-1 of the 2005 Talbot County Comprehensive Plan identifies Sand and Gravel bearing units. A large portion of eastern Talbot County is identified as having such deposits. The western boundary of the identified area runs directly through the Town of Easton. Based on this map, approximately the eastern one-third to one-half of the Town is

located on potential sand and gravel bearing units. Furthermore, all of the future growth areas to the east of the current Town boundary are similarly located over such units.

Clearly it will not be a policy of the Town to allow for the extraction of sand or gravel within the already developed portions of the Town. However, it may be wise to allow for the extraction of such resources in future growth areas, both those presently located in Talbot County and those already within the Town limits, but as yet undeveloped. Such extraction should be conducted in conjunction with the development of the site as one of the very first steps. There should be no continuous sand and gravel extraction operations within the Town. The identification and use of sand and gravel prior to the development of a given site represents wise use of available resources. To go beyond that to the establishment of ongoing sand and gravel operations would be an unwise promotion or encouragement of incompatible land uses.

A related issue that occurs from time to time in Easton concerns the practice employed by some developers/land-owners whereby the topsoil on a development site is stripped and sold, then the land is developed. If the removed topsoil is not replaced, future homeowners buy into a situation whereby they have very hard, often compacted soil. It is difficult to grow anything in and hard to work in.

In order to mitigate this situation, developers should be required to finish all building lots with topsoil of a depth sufficient to satisfy growing needs for lawns, gardens, and landscaping. This should be made one of the standard requirements for land development. If the cost of replacing the topsoil becomes too prohibitive, then the hope is that it is not removed in the first place.

MINERAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To enable the use of identified mineral resources in appropriate locations as a prerequisite to the eventual development of those sites.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Identify mineral resources on a given site as early as possible in the development review process.
- ✓ Examine Town regulations to insure that mineral extraction is permitted in limited circumstances with appropriate safeguards against undue neighborhood impacts.

GOAL: To ensure that home sites contain topsoil of a quantity and quality necessary to support lawns, gardens, and/or landscaping.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Review the Town's adopted Standard Details to insure that the standard for topsoil on newly developed lots is adequate to support the growth of healthy plant life.