

During the September 23, 2025 meeting of the Washington County Board of County Commissioners I discussed activities at Greenhill Farms and mentioned that it might be necessary to sue over a perceived lack of enforcement of existing easements. It is reasonable to assume I was considering the Town of Sharpsburg suing Greenhill Farms. I was not. The Town of Sharpsburg does not have any intentions of suing Greenhill Farms and a careful examination of all PIA requests will show that there were no discussions of such a law suit among any council members, staff or legal counsel prior to the commissioners meeting. The topic of our discussion was how do easement fit into county zoning decision making process. At the end of the meeting Gill Baker said when asked about how the easements fit in; she replied the easements are “a legal contract between the property owner and the Maryland Environmental Trust”. I replied at that time I get it. I realized that if there is an issue it would be a Trust issue.

Why we and you should care. Sharpsburg is a place that many of us chose because of its small-town charm, rural environment, history, and sense of community. The battle cry has always been keeping Sharpsburg the way it is and not let it become another Gettysburg. Between 1985 and 1995 an easement program was established with MET as the manager. In Washington County there are 52 such easements with the majority (47) in south county bordering the Antietam Battlefield totaling roughly 4,000 acres. If the average easement was just over \$100,000 then the total value of these easements was about \$5 million in 1994 or over \$10 million today. We should all be concerned as to how the MET stewardship program is managed to ensure compliance with the terms of each unique conservation easement. Easement recipients should not be allowed to double dip having both been paid for an easement and then allowed to conduct commercial activity.

How are landowner requests processed? Does the conservation easement outline the request and approval process or is it somewhere in trust documentation? Are there standards to be applied to the decision-making process? How much lead way do the statutes creating and governing MET provide? These are reasonable questions any affected citizens should ask. If I were an activist/journalist interested in how government works and how government monies are spent, I would dig into the MET process and how decisions for relief are made.

One quick personal note. I was told that one attack line was that I was anti-female business. I would simply remind people my wife owned and operated her own business for 40 years with my total support. Out of the 10 Sharpsburg Businesses 7 are owned and operated by females.