



An Association for All Bethany Beach, DE Property Owners

August 21, 2026

Mr. Doug Hudson
President
Sussex County Council

Dear Council Member Hudson,

We are writing to you today asking for your continued support in voting in favor of a strong Forest Preservation Ordinance - as recommended by the appointed Land Use Reform Working Group. The Council sought the support of this group to better understand the details and intricacies of the issue in question. The recommendations provided by the working group reflect the public view, gathered through various sometimes contentious discussions, and deserve the Council's full support in adopting them.

As we have discussed with you in several meetings, BBLA represents close to 1,000 property owners in your district. In repeated polls, respondents have overwhelmingly indicated concern about the unsustainable changes that have happened and continue to happen in eastern Sussex County. For the reasons listed below, we urge you to vote in favor of the recommended Forest Preservation Ordinance and to oppose any proposals to weaken its protections.

- There are 43,560 square feet in an acre of land. Sticking with the 10,000 sf will protect about 74% MORE forest (a change to the 1-acre number proposed by developers will DESTROY 74% more forest). A 10,000 square foot forest provides habitat, water quality, CO2 sequestration, temperature modulation, noise buffering, and flood water storage benefits. Considering the tremendous loss of forest in Delaware and Sussex County every forest stand is critically important. It takes nearly 100 years for forest to grow and mature, so mitigation that consists of plantings cannot make up for the actual ecological losses.

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- It is critically important that developers be required to plant, manage, and ensure tree survival in some amount greater than what was cleared. While a 2/1 ratio provides some ecological benefit, the scientific literature, and most federal programs, require developers to conduct a functional analysis of the trees/habitat cleared so that a replacement functional value can be achieved to truly make up for the losses. It isn't just the number of trees, it is their age, diameter breast height, health, associated vegetation (understory), rarity, and functions such as habitat, water quality, CO2 sequestration, temperature modulation, noise buffering, and flood water storage benefits. Based on a functional analysis, ratios could be 10/1 in some situations. It takes many years to grow or re-grow a forest or stand of trees (and associated understory shrubs and plants). Higher replacement ratios help ensure that developers actually replace losses that harm people, communities, quality of life, and fish and wildlife.
- It is critically important, and well-accepted ecologically, that any replacement/plantings occur as close to the location of the losses. Planting elsewhere will degrade and destroy the development area, and no replacement benefit will occur in the affected locations. Coagulating replacements and plantings in remote and limited locations will continue the trend of overall degradation of Sussex County, remove areas important for life cycles of fish and wildlife, and deny the public the many benefits trees, forests, and associated vegetation provide.

We were very pleased to read your statements to the Coastal Point when interviewed on the topic:

"I don't see a downside to saving the trees." Hudson explained his rationale for this effort is that the mature trees help stop run-off, consume carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. There is also the beauty and history of the mature trees, along with their importance in providing homes for wildlife. Hudson also said that if a developer clears the trees, sells the timber and topsoil, then replaces those trees with saplings, it can take generations for those saplings to turn into full-grown trees.

'Why not just leave it where it is?' he asked."

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We encourage you to stand fast --- do NOT change your views and support for a strong Forest Preservation Ordinance at this critical point in time when it appears Sussex County has already reached capacity, and our sustainability and resilience capabilities continue to be reduced day- by-day, which is something detrimental to all County residents (let alone the State as a whole). We implore you to vote, on August 25th, for a strong Forest Preservation Ordinance for the economic, environmental, social benefits forests provide, and to preserve county and community health.

Sincerely yours,

Chris Lorence

BBLA President
Board of Directors