



Thomas E. Dernoga

Chair

District 1, Democrat
Phone: (301) 952-3887
Fax: (301) 952-4801
TTY: (301) 925-5167
TEDernoga@co.pg.md.us



Constituent area includes: Adelphi, Beltsville, Calverton, College Park, Laurel, Montpelier, South Laurel, Vansville and West Laurel.

Thomas E. Dernoga took office representing Council District One on the Prince George's County Council on January 29, 2002, following a Special Election to replace the late Walter H. "Mike" Maloney. Council Member Dernoga was re-elected in 2002 and 2006, and selected by his colleagues to serve as County Council Vice-Chair for the 2005 Legislative Year and County Council Chair for the 2006 Legislative Year.

Mr. Dernoga is a life-long resident of Central Maryland. He has resided in Prince George's County since 1980. Council Member Dernoga and his wife Lenora, bought a home in West Laurel in 1985. They have lived in West Laurel for more than 20 years.

Mr. Dernoga holds a Bachelor of Arts in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland College Park (1981); a Juris Doctorate (with honors) from the University of Maryland School Of Law (1984); and a Master of Laws in Taxation from Georgetown University Law Center (1988). Mr. Dernoga has been a member of the Maryland State Bar since 1985, and is a member of Prince George's County Bar Association. Prior to his election to the Prince George's County Council, Mr. Dernoga maintained a general law practice emphasizing land use, environmental, administrative, and tax matters but now concentrates on County Council business.

Council Member Dernoga currently serves as Chair of the Council Committee on Transportation, Housing and Environment (THE), and as Vice-Chair of the Council Committee on Planning, Zoning and Economic Development (PZED). In addition, Council Member Dernoga is Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (COG) Metropolitan Development Policy Committee, which reports to the COG Board of Directors on regional population growth, economic growth and land use issues.

Mr. Dernoga, then a Baltimore tax lawyer, began his civic activist career in 1987, after attending a West Laurel Civic Association (WLCA) strategy meeting concerned with opposing a large unwanted commercial development on the community's doorstep. Mr. Dernoga left that meeting as the WLCA's new pro bono zoning lawyer despite the fact that he knew nothing about zoning law or land use. Over the next two months, Mr. Dernoga taught himself zoning law and land use planning, and helped lead 800 neighbors in successful opposition to the development. It was an unexpected beginning that led to a 15-year run as a WCLA leader, with regular involvement in land use planning in Prince George's County and Central Maryland.

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Mr. Dernoga put his new zoning law and civic activist background to public benefit, offering low cost legal services to civic groups around Prince George's County and Central Maryland. Mr. Dernoga soon found himself appearing before the Zoning Hearing Examiner, the Planning Board, the County Council and even Circuit Courts and the Court of Special Appeals. Mr. Dernoga helped citizens fight against a major sand & gravel operation in Clinton; helped citizens fight the major expansion of the Hyde Field Airport into a large industrial airpark; defended civic associations in Fort Washington sued by a developer; helped the Broad Creek Historic District residents defend the County's only historic district from incompatible development; helped environmental groups save the Belt Woods old-growth forest off Church Road from development; helped Oxon Hill residents fight National Harbor; helped Baltimore County environmentalist prevent the University of Maryland Baltimore County from expanding its business park campus into critical wetlands; and Bowie residents prevent environmentally damaging development in the Horspen Branch stream valley.

Prior to his election to the County Council, Mr. Dernoga served as President (1989-91 and 1995-97) and Vice-President (1997-2001) of the West Laurel Civic Association; Secretary of the Bond Mill Elementary School Parent and Teacher Association (1994-96); Coach and Team Manager of the Laurel Boys and Girls Club; member of Board of Education Committee of 100 Community Advisory Committee (1997-Present); member of Prince George's County Commission 2000 Growth Task Force (1998-2000); member of Laurel Regional Planning and Transportation Committee (1992-96); member of Partnership for Regional Excellence of Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (1992-93); and member of Prince George's County Alternative Law Density Task Force Committee (1991).