



Frederick Circuit Court Orders Release of Sugarloaf Plan Documents

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 8, 2023

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FREDERICK, Maryland – Today Frederick Circuit Court Judge Robert Greenberg ordered Frederick County to release the bulk of Sugarloaf Plan records requested by Sugarloaf Alliance. Records withheld by the County on the grounds of Attorney Client Privilege and Confidential Commercial Information privilege will be reviewed by the Judge in chambers. A decision on those records is scheduled for August 17, 2023.

Following two Sugarloaf Alliance Public Information Act requests in October 2021, Frederick County identified 158 responsive records including emails, plans, memos, and maps. The County withheld all but 20 records, citing various privileges. Following today’s Court order, 125 records will be made public. The remaining 13 records will be reviewed by Judge Greenberg. The Judge will either order the release of these records, order a partial release, or affirm the County’s decision to withhold the records.

Sugarloaf Alliance initially filed a lawsuit against the Frederick County government, in June 2022, under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). The suit sought release of public records related to development of the Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan. During drafting, unexplained changes in the Plan's boundary and text were made outside the normal public process. Sugarloaf Alliance filed two public information requests in 2021 for documents linked to the unexplained changes. The Maryland Public Information Act allows up to 30 days for release of public records. Frederick County failed to respond for over 200 days, forcing the Alliance to file a lawsuit.

“This is a huge win for both preservation of the Sugarloaf Region and for government transparency,” said Sugarloaf Alliance President Steve Black. “The Maryland Public Information Act exists to guarantee the people’s right to peak behind the curtain of government operations. With the release of these public records, we should finally have an accounting of the backroom efforts to manipulate the Sugarloaf Plan.”

“The MPIA exists to ensure that the people can be fully informed about the actions of their government,” said Sugarloaf Alliance attorney Rignal Baldwin. “Maryland law does not allow for secret county and developer projects.” he added. “When you ask a government what they’re up to and they say, ‘Nothing, go away,’ that is not an acceptable response.”

Sugarloaf Alliance, Inc. represents over 500 stakeholders in the Sugarloaf region. The Alliance’s mission is to protect the unique natural and historical aspects of the Sugarloaf Mountain area and its environment through education and initiatives in support of watersheds, streams, meadows, forests, and historic sites. Working with volunteers, civic groups, and local, state, and federal agencies, the organization’s primary goal is to preserve the unique character and serenity of the area for future generations. Sugarloaf Alliance is a 501(c)(3) organization.