

Wellington Calls on Stanley to Resign

Activist says planning director's apology for controversial comments is "a day late and a dollar short."

BY STEVE HULL

Montgomery County Planning Director **Rollin Stanley** has apologized for controversial comments he made in a recent *Bethesda Magazine* story about a group of women who oppose many of his development policies. But one local activist said Friday that the apology was "a day late and a dollar short" and that Stanley "should resign effective immediately."

In "The Future Is Looking Up" by **Eugene L. Meyer**, Stanley called dissenters "rich, white women...spreading fear." He also said opponents stalk his appearances and call themselves "the coven."

The March/April issue features Stanley on the cover and includes three stories that describe plans, strongly advocated by Stanley, to make the county more urban through the development of high-rise communities.

Stanley's comments evoked a strong reaction from four of his most vocal opponents—**Pat Baptiste, Julie Davis, Jenny Sue Dunner** and **Meredith Wellington**—as well as harsh words from the planning board, disbelief among many Montgomery County officials, and questions about whether he can survive the tumult.

In response to the controversy, Stanley sent a [letter](#) to *Bethesda Magazine* Wednesday: "It was not my intention to denigrate the opinions of any citizen or discourage anyone from participating in the debate over the future of Montgomery County," he wrote.

Wellington wrote an email to *Bethesda Magazine* Friday, saying Stanley's response so far has been inadequate. "It has been over 10 days since I first learned of Mr. Stanley's disparaging, false statements about myself and other 'dissenters,'" she wrote. "... Since then, I have received one direct communication from Mr. Stanley. In a handwritten note Mr. Stanley wrote: 'Meredith, when I suggested to Gene [Meyer] that he contact you for the Bethesda Mag article, I did not expect he would go in the direction he did. I hope it did not cause you much concern or attention.' "

Wellington wrote that Stanley's letter "is a day late and a dollar short. The time has passed for him to act to show his respect and open mindedness towards the public. In my opinion, in making those statements to *Bethesda Magazine*, and then failing to take the proper actions to remedy his outrageous behavior, Mr. Stanley has shown himself to be unfit for the position he holds as Director of Planning, and he should resign effective immediately."

Stanley, who is visiting his native Canada, could not be reached for comment.

In his [letter](#) to Bethesda Magazine, Stanley wrote that "I regret any pain or embarrassment my words may have caused. ...Part of what has made Montgomery County great is its long tradition of active engagement by highly dedicated and serious advocates on a wide range of issues, including land use and real estate development. In view of this especially, I apologize for coming across as dismissive of critics of the Planning Department. I do believe that

open public discourse is essential both to good decisions and to democratic accountability. I intend to make every effort to be inclusive and welcoming of different perspectives as we work together to strengthen our community.”

Earlier this week, Wellington, Baptiste, Davis and Dunner wrote to Planning Board Chairwoman Françoise Carrier asking the board to “publicly disavow” Stanley’s remarks.

“Through these remarks, Mr. Stanley has impugned our integrity, attacked our credibility, and damaged our personal and professional reputations,” they wrote.

At the start of a Planning Board meeting Thursday, Carrier [strongly criticized](#) Stanley and promised “appropriate corrective action.”

Carrier said: “The statements attributed to Mr. Stanley [in the *Bethesda Magazine* story] regarding certain members of the community, and the sentiments expressed, in no way reflect the views of this Board or this agency. This agency has a responsibility to the public, to invite public participation in the planning process, to encourage public discourse, to solicit the views of all residents of the county, from all backgrounds, and to remain respectful to those individuals and organizations regardless of the opinions they hold. Unfortunately, Mr. Stanley’s comments did not portray these values. ...While we are grateful to Mr. Stanley for the work he has done on behalf of the Agency and for this county to date, we did not sanction his interview..., nor do we condone the views he expressed.”

It is unclear what the “appropriate corrective action” will be. Carrier could not be reached Friday morning for comment.

In an interview Thursday night, County Council Member Nancy Floreen said she has asked Carrier “to deal with this aggressively,” although she wouldn’t say whether Stanley should be fired. “I find this to be an intolerable situation,” Floreen said. “Our residents are passionate and you have to respect them for it.”

Wellington, Baptiste, Davis and Dunner also sent a [letter](#) to *Bethesda Magazine* in which they said they “are appalled that Mr. Stanley, the County’s senior planner, would intentionally engage in a smear campaign against us because we have exercised our rights as County residents to question current efforts to change the face of suburban Montgomery County.”

The letter continues: “By dismissing us as ‘rich white women’ (a blatantly racial and sexist slur) who ‘spread fear’ and ‘sow discord,’ and by claiming that we describe ourselves as members of a ‘coven’ and thus by implication are not to be taken seriously by local elected and appointed planning officials, Mr. Stanley has impugned our integrity, attacked our credibility, and damaged our personal and professional reputations.”