

Joe Urban

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Subject: Lancaster actions

Last month, Cora Tiggle, Don McGonegal and I visited with the county administrator, Bill Pennell to find out more about the possibilities of a sewage treatment plant sited on Mosquito Point Road and a Boundary Line Adjustment (BLA) by White Stone to include all property on Mosquito Point Road. Bill was most helpful and provided us with a lot of information distilled below.

First, the sewage treatment system is the subject of a preliminary engineering study to provide collection and treatment of sewage from the lower part of the county which will be finished soon. As noted publicly there are three alternatives: A site in the vicinity of Mosquito Point, near Carters Creek, or use of the present plant operated by Kilmarnock. The first of these seems to be favored by White Stone and Irvington town councils; the outfall of such a plant would go into the River rather than already polluted Carters Creek. We pointed out the water depth off Mosquito Point was very shallow (4 - 5') compared with the water above the bridge. However, modern treatment facilities should yield effluent of relatively high purity and in small volume. we also pointed out that the greatest need comes from the Carters Creek area and that cost should drive the location of the plant there. Bill said also that costs of necessary upgrades to the Kilmarnock plant would encourage that town to embrace the Public Service Authority (PSA) and offer its underutilized capacity to help defray those costs. We went on to point out that the Kilmarnock plant was obscure and that wherever any new plant was sited, it should be equally obscure since there are plenty of forested areas which could be used; Bill so noted.

Bill went on to say that a DEQ study of Carters Creek concluded that that entire community ought to have centralized sewage treatment since the treated effluents of the many individual systems cannot come close to meeting DEQ standards for the creek. He said that he had understood that DEQ also did a study for the whole of Lancaster County. However, Mark Allen of DEQ said that no such studies had been done. Bill said that based on that (?) study the day would come when EVERYONE in the county would have to pay for access to a sewage system by state mandate. The cost to users would be monthly fees (~\$30/month) for those who signed up early but heavy fees for connecting later; Kilmarnock charges \$15000 for new users. He said that the selection of alternative would be determined by cost and environmental impact, but that politics could have an impact, too. Bill said specifically that development of the Golden Eagle did not

need a PSA since they already have an adequate facility in association with Tides Inn.

Mark Allen of DEQ explained that they do periodic sampling of all tidal waters for pH and dissolved oxygen. If pH is too high or oxygen is too low, they investigate the causes and enforce remedial actions. He felt that central sewage treatment and control of agricultural nutrient runoff would both improve water quality but offered no relative priority or quantitative assessments. Many other agencies including EP, VIMS, and ODU sample/assess Bay water quality, but none that I could find specifically call out problem areas in Lancaster County water except for metals in Carters Creek.

I visited the Shellfish unit of the VA Dept of Health in White Stone.

Bill McCarty spent some time giving me a very good description of their activities. They sample tidal waters on a rotating basis, looking for high levels of e. coli. Where they are found, taking of shellfish is prohibited. They also do door-to-door queries (several thousands/year) of waterfront properties looking for septic system troubles. Both types of problems are reported to the VA Dept of Health in Lancaster. He said that they pretty well know in advance where there are likely to have problems, since they know where the soil doesn't perk. Also, he felt that septic tank inspections in compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Act would substantially reduce e. coli concentrations around here.

In summary, county-wide sewage treatment would appear to have a high cost/benefit ratio at this time. It appears to benefit developers by reducing their overall costs through our help.

Second, Bill said that the BLA that White Stone is attempting does not seem to be justified and the County would not support it. It would offer us on Mosquito Point Road little besides more taxes and more people telling us what we can't do, as well as another authority which could exercise eminent domain to take our property. The final determination of a contested BLA is made by a 3-judge non-local panel. Thus, we who oppose it (as I do) should embark on a joint public display of opposition, including petitions, letters to the editor, and legal representation.

Most important, Bill said that no rezoning is required under the current Comprehensive Plan for municipal activities. This is good, since a rezoning from R-1 or A-2 to some industrial or commercial zoning could be used for further rezoning even in a residential area.

We should be sensitive to this item in revision of the Plan to begin soon. But if we were within White Stone, the town council could decide to take R-1 property and use it for a community boat launch, for example. So the Comprehensive Plan can be a double-edged sword. The public will be invited to comment on it this month; we should do so.

Help. Others have to get involved in opposing the PSA, White Stone's BLA proposal, and review of the Comprehensive Plan. This last item can be used to wreak large changes in our community, to the benefit of developers and land speculators, but not residents.

Please pass this on to interested parties. Also, if you find errors or want to add to this, please advise me.

Sam Marshall

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