

**RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD
OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Meeting of Thursday, November 2, 2006
Northern Senior Center**

MINUTES

Board members present: Andrew Roper, Chairperson, Robert Richardson, Vice-Chairperson, Patrick Dugan, Coleman Hillman, Jody Payne and Lisa Wainger-Rush.

Board members absent: Sam Brown and Robert Harper.

Recreation, Parks and Community Services staff and others present: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation, Parks & Community Services (RP&CS); John Knight, Whitney, Bailey, Cox and Magnani; Sam Crozier, Crozier and Associates; Dennis Nicholson, Executive Director, Housing Authority; Lori Jennings-Harris, Director, Department on Aging; Jennie Page, Deputy Director, Department on Aging; and Kathy Bailey, RP&CS, Recorder. Approximately 30 citizens were in attendance to hear the discussion on the Charlotte Hall property draft master plan.

CALL TO ORDER

The Board meeting was called to order by Andrew Roper, Chairperson, at 5:35 p.m. in the auditorium of the Northern Senior Center in Charlotte Hall.

JOINT PRESENTATION TO THE RECREATION AND PARKS BOARD AND THE COMMISSION ON AGING ON THE CHARLOTTE HALL PROPERTY DRAFT MASTER PLAN

Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation, Parks and Community Services, introduced members of the Recreation and Parks Board, members of the Commission on Aging and staff from the Department of Aging and the Housing Authority. Mr. Rollins provided an overview of the project for Board members and the public. He informed those in attendance that a public meeting was held in June 2005 to solicit input for master planning efforts for the 40-acre Northern Senior Center site. The majority of those in attendance at the June meeting wished to see senior housing and recreational facilities on the site.

Staff presented information to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in October 2005 on site conditions and limitations for several County-owned properties in the Charlotte Hall area with regard to possible locations for recreational facilities and senior housing. The BOCC concurred that the Northern Senior Center property is the most suitable site for developing senior housing, an indoor recreation/multi-generational center and a swimming pool. All of these are compatible with and complimentary to the existing Senior Center. The Board also supported exploring the feasibility of using property at the Convenience Center property and Fifth District Park to expand athletic and recreational facilities, particularly additional practice fields for soccer, football and lacrosse with this decision.

Over the past year, staff from RP&CS, Department of Aging and the Housing Authority have been meeting with representatives from Whitney, Bailey, Cox and Magnani on developing a draft master plan. The senior housing portion of the plan and related sewer requirements have been a significant challenge. The group didn't think enough senior housing could be located on the property to make the project feasible with conventional drain fields or through establishment of a private wastewater treatment facility for the site. Staff contacted the Maryland Environmental Service, which manages the wastewater treatment facility for the Veterans Home to determine the feasibility of tying into the facility at the Veterans Home. According to the Service, a costly engineering study would be needed to determine if it's feasible to upgrade the facility to accommodate senior housing. Since then, staff has learned that public sewer may be a possibility in the foreseeable future for the Charlotte Hall Town Center if private commercial development moves forward and is required to upgrade facilities. In light of this, the plan was drafted with the assumption that public sewer would be available in the future to accommodate this project.

Mr. Rollins introduced Sam Crozier, Crozier and Associates, who presented information on the site, existing conditions and possible uses for the property. Much of the 40-acre property is wooded and consists mostly of hardwoods and pines. The topography of the site is mostly flat. There is an existing forest conservation easement on the property that would need to be relocated if the area is developed for uses other than passive recreation.

The senior housing element of the draft plan includes quad or four-plex cottages (100 units), apartments (150 units) and assisted living (60 units) areas. The plan includes a multi-generational center, an indoor pool, green space, storm water management, an interior road system and parking areas. The plan calls for two entrances on Charlotte Hall Road; if traffic is an issue, another possibility to explore would be a connection to Whalen Road. The pool and multi-generational center are centrally located to benefit all users. The facilities will be lighted, providing lighting to the surrounding senior community areas. Everything is connected via a sidewalk system within the property.

John Knight, Whitney, Bailey, Cox and Magnani, provided information on what could be built on the property with conventional drain fields and with public sewer. Garden apartments, with approximately 150 units, would be all that could be built with private drain fields; a large portion of the land area would need to be reserved for sewage easements. With public sewer, several hundred units, of each type, could be built.

Mr. Rollins noted that Commissioner Larry Jarboe expressed regret that he could not attend the meeting tonight due to a prior commitment.

Comments from R&P Board, Commission on Aging and Citizens

Patrick Dugan asked about the number of parking spaces for the quad cottages; Mr. Crozier replied that one space is planned per unit.

A citizen asked if fire and rescue needs were taken into consideration in drafting the plan; Mr. Crozier stated that those needs were taken into consideration. Sidewalks can also be built to accommodate fire and rescue equipment.

A citizen asked about the timeframe for public water and sewer for the property. Mr. Rollins stated that the site has access to public water; access to public sewer depends on County approvals and when private development moves forward to build the infrastructure.

A citizen asked if this is considered a senior complex, then why are we considering placing a multi-generational facility on the site? Mr. Rollins stated that was one of the needs identified after the public meeting of June 2005 and the BOCC directed staff to include the multi-generational center for consideration in the draft plan. The citizen asked if a pool and recreational center were included in the master plan for Chaptico Park? Mr. Rollins stated that yes, those items were considered during the planning for Chaptico Park, but are not programmed at this time.

A citizen asked about the feasibility of the County acquiring additional property adjacent to the Senior Center property for expansion. Mr. Rollins stated that one property owner was approached about that, but is not interested at this time.

A citizen asked about the income levels for the future senior housing community. Mr. Rollins stated that has not been determined, since it is unknown who would own and operate the facilities at this time. Mr. Nicholson stated that the BOCC would need to decide some funding parameters for the project before it moves forward; that would determine income levels and possible homeownership options for the project.

Dale Grace asked about trip generation for the site if the project moves forward; Mr. Rollins stated that he's not sure at this time as this a draft plan and a traffic study hasn't been done for this project. Mr. Grace didn't think the site could expand much more without access to Whalen Road. Mr. Knight stated that about 200 parking spaces have been planned for the multi-generational center to accommodate events and activities. The senior residential portion of the site shouldn't significantly affect peak hour numbers.

Dan Donahue asked if the site would be served by public transportation. Mr. Rollins stated he expected it would. Mr. Donahue thought that would help with the traffic. He also noted the benefits of having the Three Notch Trail adjacent to the site.

A citizen asked if hosting events would cause traffic and noise problems within the senior community. Mr. Crozier didn't think it would significantly impact the community as the events would be held indoors and on evenings and weekends.

A citizen asked if public sewer comes to Charlotte Hall would it open up other opportunities for development of the surrounding area? Mr. Rollins stated that's a question for planning staff, but if sewer comes to Charlotte Hall it would have an impact on development; that might come whether this project moves forward or not. Mr. Rollins stated that he does not know when public sewer will be available in Charlotte Hall, but if public sewer is available this project could be accommodated.

A citizen asked if the concept is approved, how long would citizens have to wait before it's built? Mr. Rollins stated that's hard to say. The project would have to go through the approval process and the BOCC would have to decide if they could fund the project. The housing and recreational portions of the project would probably be phased over several years.

A citizen was concerned about youth damaging facilities that seniors would use. Mr. Rollins stated that staff shouldn't have a problem maintaining the facility. Seniors would still have the Northern Senior Center and have shared use of the multi-generational center and pool. Senior programs could be scheduled at times that shouldn't conflict with youth programs. Staff and the BOCC visited a similar multi-generational facility in Harford County and were impressed by that facility.

Andy Roper stated that it's very important to consider the needs of all the citizens who attended the public meeting in June 2005; he supported the multi-generational approach to the plan.

Joe St. Clair recommended that staff obtain Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) comments in the near future in order that comments can be addressed before going to the Planning Commission.

The R&P Board and the Commission on Aging are expected to take a position on the plan within the next few weeks. The concept plan will be presented to the Planning Commission and the BOCC for input in January 2007.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lisa Wainger-Rush motioned, seconded by Robert Richardson, to approve both the regular session minutes and the executive session minutes of September 7, 2006. Motion carried with all in favor.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Recreation and Parks Board will be held on Thursday, December 7, 2006, at 5:30 p.m., in Room 14 of the Governmental Center in Leonardtown.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder

Minutes approved by the Recreation and Parks Board on December 7, 2006.