

Debra L. Jones, Port Tobacco, MD

Public Comments Session Tues, 7/23/24 – County-owned 50 acres near Maryland Airport intended for employment use

Good evening commissioners.

My name is Debra Jones. Tonight I'd like to address some rumors that the 50-acre, county-owned parcel adjacent to Maryland Airport (and currently the subject of the Airport Business Park zoning) was NOT intended for Economic Development, when actually, employment use was the reason it was deeded to the County.

First, some brief background for those who may not be familiar with this situation:

More than 20 years ago, a developer planned a mixed use project named Chapman's Landing on 2,200 acres of land in Western Charles County, mostly between Indian Head Highway and the Potomac River. Environmentalists who were concerned about the impact of that project lobbied the state, which eventually purchased the 2,200+ acres.

One of the major concerns at that time was the loss of Economic Development benefits to Charles County as a resulting of preserving that land.

What I am about to read from is directly from the 2005 Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the County and the environmental non-profit, Chapman Forest Foundation, Inc. I am not sure if that organization still exists, but it was headed at the time by President Bonnie Bick, whom I am sure you all know.

The MoA is accompanied by a June 30, 2005 letter from Ms. Bick, President of Chapman Forest Foundation, which starts with:

“The Chapman Forest Foundation endorses the goal of the development of the 50 acre section, as described in the April 25, 2005 Memorandum of Agreement between the Commissioners and the Foundation, so as to provide employment opportunities in Charles County...”

Quoting the MoA: “As part of the purchase agreement, IN CONSIDERATION OF THE LOSS OF THE SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES which had been conditions of approval for the proposed Chapman’s Landing development, the County Commissioners received...an assurance from the State that the State would reserve for...industrial development a fifty acre section of Chapman Forest...and...would in the future reach an agreement that would lead to the site’s development for County approved economic development purposes.” This last part eventually resulted in the State conveying the 50 acres directly to the County.

“...the FOUNDATION ENDORSES THE GOAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT of the 50 acre section SO AS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES in a way consistent with all environmental laws and regulations...the development of the fifty acre section...will benefit the people of Maryland and of Charles County both in terms of environmental protection and preservation, and beneficial economic development...”

This MoA was signed by all five Commissioners in office at the time, and it demonstrates clearly that the parcel was always intended to be used for Economic Development, employment use. I will e-mail a copy of the MoA with my public comments. Thank you.

ATTACHED:

- June 30, 2005 letter from Chapman Forest Foundation President Bonnie Bick to the Commissioner Wayne Cooper, President of the Charles County Commissioners
- Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the Commissioners of Charles County and Chapman Forest Foundation, Inc. April 25, 2005
- Declaration of the Charles County Commissioners on Chapman Forest and the Chapman Forest Foundation, Inc. April 25, 2005

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CHAPMAN FOREST FOUNDATION, INC.**POB K BRYANS ROAD MD 20616****TEL. (301) 283-2948****FAX (202) 478-5050****e-mail info@chapmanforest.org**

Hon. Wayne Cooper, President
Charles County Commissioners
PO Box 2150
La Plata, MD 20646

June 30, 2005

Dear President Cooper:

The Chapman Forest Foundation endorses the goal of the development of the 50 acre section, as described in the April 25, 2005, Memorandum of Agreement between the Commissioners and the Foundation, so as to provide employment opportunities in Charles County, as envisioned as part of the October 1998 transfer of Chapman Forest to the State of Maryland. The Foundation willingly embraces its role and responsibilities as set forth in that MOA as regards to the 50 acre section and every other part of the agreement.

We are happy to work with the County on what we have agreed are our mutual goals. This cooperation will result in the fulfillment of the letter and the spirit of the October 1998 purchase of Chapman Forest by the State of Maryland, and the April 25, 2005, Memorandum of Agreement between the Commissioners and the Foundation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie Bick".

Bonnie Bick
President, Chapman Forest Foundation, Inc.

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MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

THIS Memorandum of Agreement is between the County Commissioners of Charles County, Maryland, (hereinafter, "the Commissioners"), and the Chapman Forest Foundation, Inc., a tax exempt charitable organization under Internal Revenue Section 501(c)(3), headquartered in Charles County (hereinafter, "the Foundation").

As a result of a public education campaign initiated and pursued by the Foundation for many years, in 1998 the State of Maryland purchased from a developer a 2,250 acre tract of land approved for mixed use development. Hereinafter, the term "Chapman's Landing" refers to the mixed-use development proposal which was abandoned when the State of Maryland purchased the tract of land, and the term "Chapman Forest" refers to the 2,250 acre tract of land.

The reason for the purchase was so that the people of Maryland could enjoy and benefit from Chapman Forest's biodiversity, its historic character, its potential for scientific and archaeological research, and its many public access opportunities consistent with maintaining the previously mentioned attributes unharmed and intact.

According to the terms of the purchase agreement, the developer received a cash payment from the State, a portion of which was provided by a conservation organization. In return, the developer agreed to forfeit and did forfeit all ownership interest and all development rights in the property.

As part of the purchase agreement, in consideration of the loss of the substantial economic development opportunities which had been conditions of approval for the proposed Chapman's Landing development, the County Commissioners received groundwater rights beneath Chapman Forest and an assurance from the State that the State would reserve for joint State-County industrial development a fifty acre section of Chapman Forest (hereinafter the "fifty acre section"), with the understanding that the County and the State would in the future reach an agreement that would lead to the site's development for County approved economic development purposes. This fifty-acre site is on a relatively flat piece of land. It is in the headwaters of Long Herring Run, the southernmost of the two major

tributaries of Mattawoman Creek on the south side of Chapman Forest. The vitality of Long Herring Run is one of the important attributes of Chapman Forest, and the stream valley of Long Herring Run may include a Maryland Wetland of Special State Concern as defined in Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) Title 26, Subtitle 23, Chapter 06, Sections 01 & 02.

The Foundation was formed in 1991 (under the name Friends of Mount Aventine) and its goal has always been the preservation and management of Chapman Forest so that future generations can enjoy and benefit from its biodiversity, its historic character and cultural resources, its scenic beauty, and the educational and research opportunities it provides and also those public access and eco-tourism and heritage tourism opportunities that are consistent with maintaining the land's extraordinary attributes unharmed and intact in perpetuity. In the years since its formation, the Foundation has consistently and diligently evidenced its able dedication to this goal, and its competence and creativity in gathering expertise and creating appropriate activities for the public.

While Chapman Forest is a State property, its presence in Charles County makes it a responsibility of the County Commissioners to consider what role they may play in its future. Because of the mission and the above-cited competence and creativity demonstrated by the Foundation over the years with regard to the land, the Commissioners have decided and do agree to commit to developing a partnership agreement with the Foundation, and lend their full support to the realization of a partnership agreement between the Foundation and the State of Maryland, which owns Chapman Forest.

The principles of the partnership between the Commissioners and the Foundation will be as follows. The Foundation will gather and organize expertise that will design management planning for Chapman Forest, except for the fifty acre section. This management will include educational programs, research programs, public access and eco-tourism and heritage tourism programs. These programs will be designed to afford rich opportunities for public access without threatening the integrity of the biodiversity, the historic character or the cultural resources, or the scenic beauty of Chapman Forest. The Commissioners will endorse the aims of the Foundation, recognizing it as the manifestation of the informed public will of the people of Charles County and the people of Maryland, so that the Foundation can plan for Chapman Forest's future. The Commissioners will also support and endorse the efforts of the Foundation to raise funds for assisting the State of Maryland in maintaining the property and the improvements therein, including the historic Mount Aventine manor house and grounds. The Commissioners will also

endorse, support and help facilitate a partnership between the State of Maryland and the Foundation that will result in a management agreement empowering the Foundation to plan the property's future. The Commissioners and the Foundation will remain in conversation about how best to cooperate with each other.

Furthermore, the Foundation endorses the goal of the development of the 50 acre section so as to provide employment opportunities in a way consistent with all environmental laws and regulations and also with this Agreement, and will advocate the realization of this project. As part of this advocacy the Foundation will explain to the Maryland Board of Public Works, the general public, the network of environmental organizations throughout the State of Maryland, and members of the legislature of Maryland that the development of the fifty acre section, consistent with this Memorandum of Agreement, will benefit the people of Maryland and of Charles County both in terms of environmental protection and preservation, and beneficial economic development, especially in that it furthers the purposes of the 1998 purchase of Chapman Forest by the State of Maryland.

The Commissioners agree to implement best stormwater management practices for the development on the fifty acre section in accordance with federal State and County regulations and not to seek any waiver or variance in regard to stormwater management, and to consult with the Foundation regarding stormwater management for the fifty acre section, and the Foundation agrees to seek, in a timely manner, funding for the additional cost of any stormwater management improvements beyond that required by law or regulations, so as not to unreasonably delay the tract's development. The Foundation will seek to secure grants to help fund this obligation for optimal stormwater management so that neither Long Herring Run nor the Wetland of Special State Concern will suffer any adverse impact, and the County will cooperate in supporting said grant applications because it shares this goal.

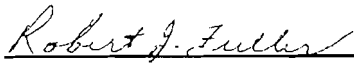
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SIGNED

COMMISSIONERS OF CHARLES COUNTY


Wayne Cooper

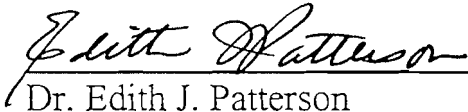
President, Charles County Commissioners



Robert J. Fuller
Commissioner



Candice Quinn Kelly
Commissioner



Dr. Edith J. Patterson
Commissioner



Allan R. Smith
Commissioner

DECLARATION OF THE CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ON
CHAPMAN FOREST AND THE CHAPMAN FOREST FOUNDATION

WHEREAS, Chapman Forest is a 2,250 acre treasure of natural and cultural resources with over 2 miles of Potomac River shoreline, and with several tributaries of the Mattawoman Creek; and

WHEREAS, this property belonging to the State of Maryland has unique natural and historical attributes that make it of great value to the people of Maryland and the people of Charles County now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, Chapman Forest has large expanses of contiguous forest, which make possible a degree of biodiversity unmatched in the Washington metropolitan area, and of national significance; and

WHEREAS, the exceptional biodiversity of Chapman Forest make it a uniquely valuable place in which to conduct scientific research; and

WHEREAS, Chapman Forest contains a great wealth of historic and archaeological resources that can provide great inspiration and rich opportunities for education and historical and archaeological research; and

WHEREAS, preserving the above mentioned attributes of Chapman Forest will bring great and irreplaceable long term economic benefits to the community because of the heritage tourism benefits and the enhanced prestige it will afford the State and County; and

WHEREAS, there are many public access opportunities that can provide the public with extraordinary enjoyment, enrichment, satisfaction and education, all without harming the biodiversity and integrity of Chapman Forest, so that generations to come can enjoy it as those of us now living can; and

WHEREAS, Chapman Forest Foundation, Inc., is the organization that was established

specifically for the purpose of securing the preservation of Chapman Forest and ensuring that its management protects its unique attributes while creating rich opportunities for enjoyment and education; and

WHEREAS, the Chapman Forest Foundation has over the years demonstrated consistently its skilled dedication to the purpose of protecting the sensitive biodiversity, the authenticity and the historic character of Chapman Forest, while providing a wealth of public access opportunities consistent with that protection; and

WHEREAS, the State of Maryland owns Chapman Forest but also considers input and concerns from the people and the elected government of Charles County, where Chapman Forest is situated;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is this 25th day of April, 2005, that the County Commissioners of Charles County, Maryland, hereby express their intent to act in partnership with the Chapman Forest Foundation, in order to help the Foundation achieve its aims and realize its vision, which are beneficial and desirable for the people of Charles County; and

FURTHERMORE, the County Commissioners will look to the Foundation to provide this vision and will assist the realization of it by endorsing the Foundation's efforts to raise the funds that will be necessary for the management of Chapman Forest in such a way that will protect its biodiversity and historic character, for which attributes the land was preserved, while affording rich public access opportunities consistent with that protection.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND


Wayne Cooper, President

Robert J. Fuller

Robert J. Fuller
Commissioner

Candice Quinn Kelly

Candice Quinn Kelly
Commissioner

Edith J. Patterson

Dr. Edith J. Patterson
Commissioner

Allan R. Smith

Allan R. Smith
Commissioner

WITNESS:

Linda C. Rollins

CHAPMAN FOREST FOUNDATION

Bonnie Bick

Bonnie Bick, President