

Old Standard annexation rejected

■ Charles Town council votes down request to include Bugler's Rest, Alstadt's Corner and the quarry.

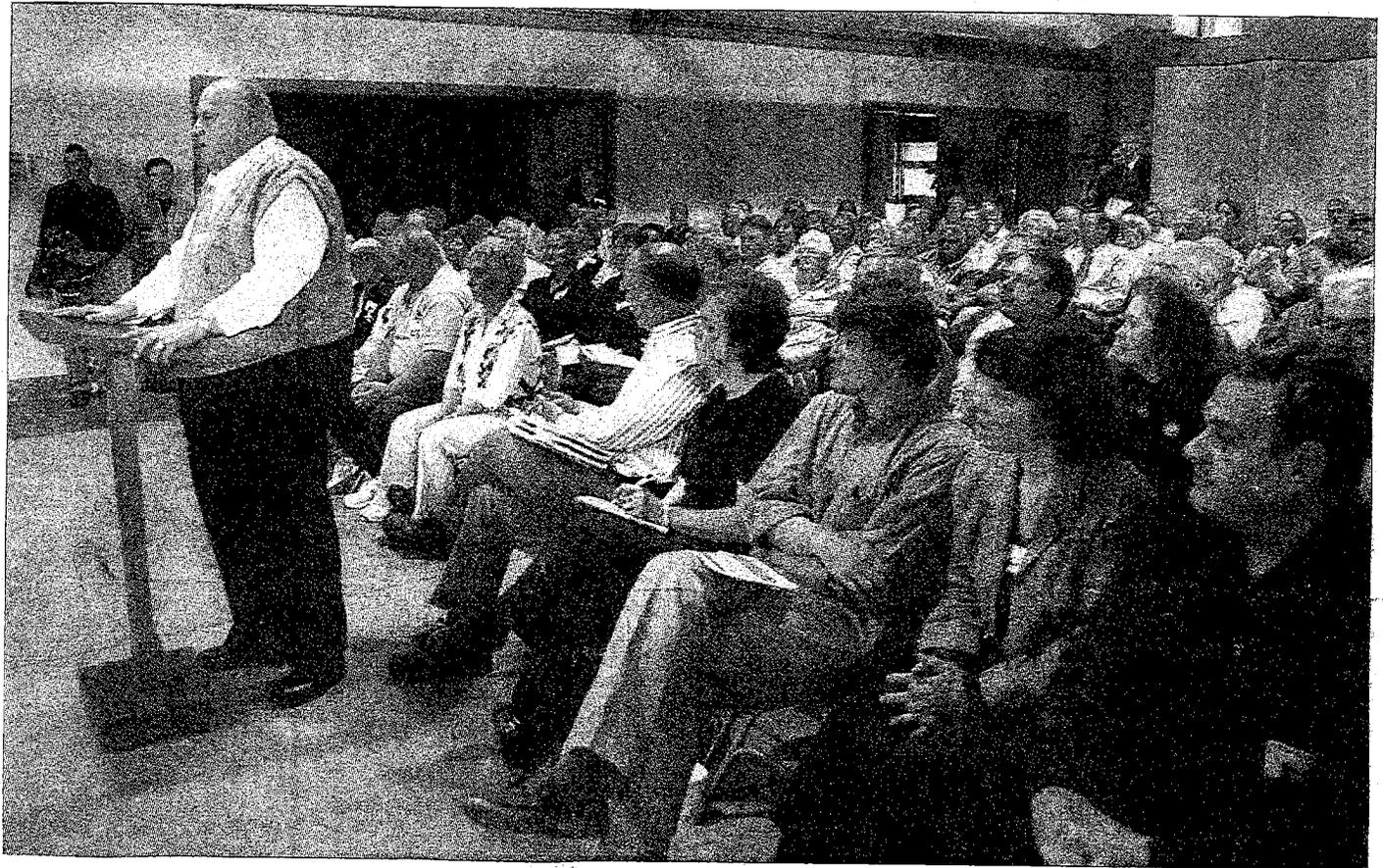
By CHRIS BROWN
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CHARLES TOWN — The City Council voted to reject the annexation of a proposed 638-acre office site during a meeting Monday night that followed on the heels of an earlier recommendation by the city's Planning Commission to approve the annexation.

The Charles Town City Council went its own way following a 3-2 vote by the town's Planning Commission to recommend the annexation of Old Standard Quarry, Bugler's Rest and Alstadt's Corner into the city of Charles Town and decided 4-3 against the annexation, with Councilman Matt Ward making the motion and Councilwoman Amy Schmitt seconding it.

Council members Timothy Robinson and Sandy Slusher-McDonald also voted against the annexation. Council members Donald Clendenning, Geraldine Willingham and Lacie Mumaw voted to approve the first reading of the ordinance.

More than 80 city and county residents, some wearing stickers bearing the slogan "preserve and protect our heritage," attended the meeting in Zion Episcopal Church in Charles Town to com-



Journal photo by Martin B. Cherry.

Residents of Jefferson County listen to acting Charles Town Mayor Robert Hardy in a packed gymnasium at Zion Episcopal Church in Charles Town on Monday.

ment on the proposal and hear the outcome Monday.

Charles Town resident Bill Gavin, who said he has lived in the area since 1947, spoke against the annexation and questioned why the developer had not approached towns nearer to the location of Old Standard.

"(The council) is being used (as) a vehicle to beat county regulations," Gavin said.

Ann Paonessa, a candidate in the upcoming City Council elections, said she thought the council was rushing toward annexation without considering the possible ramifications.

"I'm left wondering what we're trying to accomplish here," Paonessa said.

Bolivar Mayor Pro Tem Robert Hardy said his town was "100 percent against" the pro-

posed annexation. He warned that an annexation would disrupt emergency and social services and increase traffic congestion in Bolivar.

"Don't do this to our town," he said.

Harpers Ferry National Historic Park Superintendent Don Campbell also made a presentation, during which he called areas of the proposed annexation

a "pristine" Civil War battlefield and the site of the largest Union surrender in the war.

However Jim Campbell, an attorney representing the developer, disagreed that Old Standard was pristine. He said it had more than 100 years of byproducts from the quarry, which opened in the 1880s.

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He said many people in the audience would not support the preservation of the majority of the grounds if they had all the facts. He said part of the property was a now-defunct county landfill and was also littered with "moon-like" burnt lime slag, a quarry byproduct.

Jim Campbell added that the proposal could bring jobs to 6,000 county residents and add millions of dollars in tax revenue.

The majority of the Planning Commission also favored annexation in an earlier meeting Monday night, despite concerns by some members, including commission member Al Hooper, who voted against the annexation on the basis that it was too far outside the city's previous planned growth area.

City Councilman Donald Clendenning, who also sits on the Planning Commission, disagreed, saying the city did not have a set growth area.

"We do not have a growth area, so it's not outside the growth area," he said.

Planning Commission member Mark Meredith said the annexation of the property would provide a strong tax base for the city, one that could offset some of the price tag of social services and other operating costs.



Journal photo by Martin B. Cherry

Charles Town resident Bill Gavin testifies to the Charles Town Council about his distaste of the annexation of a housing development on a Civil War battlefield.

"It will provide Charles Town with a place where its sons and daughters can get a meaningful job," he said.

Meredith said the National Park Service "had their shot" at the property and that a large part of the parcel would remain green space, including a riverside park that would benefit the city.

Commission member Jeff Roth disagreed, saying even though pipe-stem annexation is legal, he thought the annexation of the Old Standard property would be "too much of a grasp."

Commission member Mark Roper also voted to recommend

the annexation, while Jeff Roth along with Hooper voted against it.

Despite the rejection by the City Council, Jim Campbell said his clients would likely continue with the project, though it was too early to tell what form this would take.

"It's too good from a land use planning perspective. It makes too much sense ... we're going to continue to pursue," he said.

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