

Panhandle

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JEFFERSON COUNTY

Council opposes rezoning

Resolutions urge park service to acquire Old Standard Quarry

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HARPERS FERRY — Harpers Ferry leaders voted unanimously this week to oppose the proposed rezoning of the Old Standard Quarry property, which is currently under consideration by county leaders.

The Harpers Ferry Council adopted two resolutions that urged the Jefferson County Planning Commission to oppose the rezoning of the property for commercial uses and that encouraged U.S. representatives to press for the acquisition of the property by the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, after listening to Paul



THOMPSON

Rosa, a member of the Harpers Ferry Conservancy discuss his concerns about the project. Another resolution presented by Rosa that would have encouraged the County Commission to "down-zone" the property to rural, in order to prevent the buildup of larger commercial parks, was not adopted by the council.

The Bolivar Town Council enacted similar resolutions during a meeting on May 1.

Harpers Ferry Councilwoman Charlotte Thompson said, while she supports contacting the state's congressional delegation, she hopes preservation efforts have already been started.

"I hope they're doing something already. We don't have much time," Thompson said.

The Old Standard LLC project site is south of U.S. 340. Plans call for a 60,000-square-foot signature office building, a 150-room hotel with a 22,500-square-foot conference center and additional office buildings along the property's lake and the Shenandoah River. Twenty acres of the site would be dedicated as parkland that could be used for hik-

ing and biking trails, as well as public fishing areas.

The property falls into two zones allowing high density residential use and rural use, while the rezoning petition seeks that the county allow commercial uses.

The rezoning petition claims that the current zoning was never a good fit. Since the old quarry was active from the 1880s through 1970s and used as an industrial site, the petition claims the property has never been suitable for the rural district. The old quarry has crumbling buildings and piles of burnt limestone, and part of the property was once the site of the

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county's old landfill.

The developer plans to clean up the property at his own expense.

The council previously passed a resolution opposing a proposed annexation of the Old Standard Quarry property into Charles Town. Rosa believed area leaders' arguments against the proposed annexation were instrumental in Charles Town's decision not to annex.

Rosa cited a traffic study that reportedly projected that 16,228 car trips would be generated daily by the proposed office park at the Old Standard property, which he said would have an impact on the community's quality of life.

After the annexation request was rejected by the Charles Town Council, the quarry project's

developers presented the rezoning petition to the Jefferson County Commission and the county Planning Commission.

Bolivar Councilman Robert Hardy said the board opposed the rezoning on the grounds that the project's business park would strain police, fire, medical and library services to both Bolivar and Harpers Ferry.

"We're the closest town, it's all going to fall on us. Harpers Ferry (emergency responders) are going to be called and get there first," Hardy said.

Hardy said he was also concerned that making U.S. 340 a four-lane road near the proposed office park would be a "death trap."

Those opposed to the project

have also cited concerns about its location next to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park property, and they say a Civil War battle took place in the area.

Developer Herb Jonkers denied that part of the property was a pristine battlefield in an earlier interview, saying that many of the "battlefields" activists wish to protect are actually parts of a landfill.

"(The trees) are growing on top of fill dirt," he said.

Jonkers' attorney, Michael Cassell, said Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has never contacted the owners of the property with the intention to buy it.

The Jefferson County Planning Commission will have a public hearing on the rezoning petition at 7 p.m. June 5 in the lower level meeting room of the Old Charles Town Library.