

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Quarry project opposition up

■ The Planning Commission will continue to discuss commercial plans.

By **BETH HENRY**
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

CHARLES TOWN — Jefferson County commissioners plan to discuss the controversial Old Standard Quarry development today, as public interest and opposition continues to grow.

The county has received more than 540 form letters from residents throughout the region, mainly from Virginia and Maryland, who are asking the board to reject a rezoning petition that would allow developers to build an

upscale commercial development in the Harpers Ferry area.

More than 20 community members and business leaders in the area also voiced their opposition to the project this week in a letter sent to the commission on Tuesday.

"Denial of this proposal should be a slam dunk," said Carol Galant, of the Jefferson County Preservation Alliance to Save Our Heritage, in a news release about the letter. "There is no other property with the historic and scenic values of this property, and it deserves the county's protection."

Project plans call for a 60,000-square-foot signature office building, a 150-room hotel and additional office buildings along the

property's lake and the Sher... doah River. The site is south of U.S. 340 along Millville Road on about 411 acres that are zoned for rural and high-density residential uses. More than 1,600 homes could be built on the property under the current zoning.

Gene Capriotti and Herb Jonkers are two of the project's developers, and they have petitioned the County Commission to rezone the property to allow for commercial use.

If the project gains approval, the developers would clean up mountains of limestone debris and run-down buildings that are left over from the old quarry, which was active from the 1880s through 1974. Part of the property was also once the site of the county's old landfill that closed in 1962.

Opponents are worried about increased traffic congestion along U.S. 340, as well as effects the commercial buildings could have on the views from nearby Harpers Ferry National Historical Park property and historic Civil War sites.

Meanwhile, those who support the project say Jefferson County desperately needs more commercial development and the 6,000 new jobs that could come with it, as well as the \$4.4 million in tax revenues that would be generated.

Commissioner Dale Manuel said Wednesday that he thinks the project deserves more review, and he hopes the rest of the commissioners agree to plan another work session.

"It's a big decision," Manuel said. "I think we should take our time and study it."

The County Commission will discuss the Old Quarry issue during the regular meeting today, which begins at 9:30 a.m. in the Courthouse. Leaders from Bolivar and Harpers Ferry have recently said they are opposed to the proj-



Journal file photo by Beth Henry

Members of the Jefferson County Commission, developers and community members recently toured the site of a proposed commercial development at the Old Standard Quarry. Piles of burnt limestone are leftover from the quarry, which was active from the 1880s through 1974 on part of the property.

ect, and they are on the agenda to talk about their concerns.

Manuel said he did not anticipate that the County Commission would make a decision today because during the last meeting two weeks ago, it seemed that all the commissioners wanted to continue gathering more information.

"I think what we need to do is sit down with all the parties involved," during a work session, Manuel said.

Commissioner Jim Surkamp said Wednesday that he is also hoping to hold off on a rezoning decision.

"My opinion is that the timing of it is unfortunate, because we're just about to rewrite our ordinances," Surkamp said. "I would like to put rezoning requests on hold," while county leaders finish the working on zoning and subdivision drafts.

He said work on the ordinances is moving into high gear right

now, as the county's new planner Tony Redman has been able to discuss issues with Lane Kendig, president of the county's consulting firm Kendig Keast Collaborative.

Surkamp also said he is wary of approving the quarry project because of all the opposition, especially from municipalities and the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

"I think we need to respect their concerns," he said.

— Staff writer Beth Henry can be reached at (304) 725-6581 or bhenry@journal-news.net

See QUARRY A2