

The Capital

Judge orders a halt to Smith farm ballfield work

A judge yesterday ordered county officials to suspend construction of athletic fields on part of a Broadneck Peninsula farm while lawyers for opponents of the project and the county try to settle a lawsuit aimed at keeping the property an equestrian center.

By agreement, grading work on the controversial \$2.1 million former Smith farm in Arnold is halted today and Monday, said Dennis Callahan, county parks and recreation director.

Yesterday's Circuit Court hearing on a lawsuit aimed at permanently stopping construction was not resolved and will be continued if the parties can't reach a compromise.

Former county executive John G. Gary Jr. testified he promised Elizabeth Gleaves in 1998 that if she sold the county the 12-acre property for \$500,000, it would be used solely for an equestrian center and named after her deceased husband.

Opponents of the project claim the contract limits its use to equestrian purposes.

County officials maintain the contract allows them to use part of the land for other "recreational purposes." They broke ground on the ballfield and multipurpose field on March 3 in hopes of easing a countywide shortage.

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