

# The Capital South County

## Development of Deep Cove Creek seems to be in works

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

While Franklin Manor residents have been fighting a plan for a senior housing project on 24 acres in the community, a potentially bigger plan is being hatched across Deep Cove Creek.

At an July 21 auction, developer Charles Snyder paid \$1.8 million for 63 acres fronting the widest section of the waterway.

The residential property, zoned for one house per acre, adjoins another 32-acre property Mr. Snyder owns off Deep Cove Road, where in 2002 he proposed building 13 houses.

Mr. Snyder was traveling and couldn't be reached for comment.

"Here we grow again," said Katherine Ostrowski, who lives with her husband, Bill Morris, on a farm across the road from the property sold by owners Robert and Charlene Passemante.

County planner Kelly Krinitz said part of the land is in the Resource Conservation Area, the most restrictive of the county's Critical Area zones. That could preclude more than three or four homes being built - unless a subdivision has been recorded for the property.

A search of court records on Tuesday going back 60 years showed no such documents.

"The Critical Area law was set up so undeveloped land near the bay would only be built (at a rate of) 1 house per 20 acres," said Mr. Morris. "Every time I turn around there is another exception or a variance" to get around the law.

Some of the 60 people who attended a July 22 meeting sponsored by the Maryland Department of the Environment, ostensibly about Crandell Cove's application for a wetland permit, were lamenting much the same thing.

The Crandell Cove project calls for 32 apartments and several ancillary buildings on about 4.5 acres of the 25-acre parcel. It has secured special exceptions and variances from the county, but needs to meet MDE requirements before getting final approval.

"The property is entirely within the Critical Area buffer, and I do not think the project should go forward," said Don Avery.

Members of local Episcopal churches and the John Crandell family, which donated the property, formed a nonprofit company, Crandell Cove Inc., to build the project.

"We are just trying to do something for south county and its elderly citizens," said Phyllis

Taylor, daughter of Crandell matriarch Jewell Crandell.

Then her mother, who originally wasn't going to speak, slowly made her way to the podium.

"We always considered this for the people in the county ... We have only tried to help," Mrs. Crandell said.

Still, most of the people attending oppose the project, which will disturb about 1 percent of the wetlands on the site.

"You can't tell me having (apartment buildings) and parking 100 feet from wetlands won't affect them," Mr. Avery said.

They also called into question the basis of the meeting, advertised as a chance to discuss the Crandell Cove LLC application for a MDE permit to disturb the wetlands. But in reality the developer has asked for a waiver from that permit.

A project disturbing fewer than 5,000 square feet of wetland is eligible for a waiver if it has minimal impact on the critical area.

Protestants urged denial of such a waiver for the project and questioned whether suitable alternative sites have been sought for it, as required by state rules.

"The process requires the developer to first avoid, then minimize, then mitigate impacts on wetlands," said attorney Thomas Deming, who has been active in environmental cases and attended the meeting.

MDE will hold the period for written comments open until Aug. 5. Then it will decide whether to grant a waiver to the permit. Once that is resolved, the county will make final determinations on the project.

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