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Councilman drops Lee Airport plan

Reilly to withdraw land swap at shopping center

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

County Council Chairman Ed Reilly plans to pull a bill next week that would have cleared the way for a minor land swap needed to build a shopping center next to Lee Airport, saying the developer must resolve environmental issues.

Citing concerns about stormwater control and impervious surfaces, the Crofton Republican said he'll withdraw the bill on Tuesday, the day debate is scheduled on the measure.

"They have not met the benchmarks that are in the covenants," Mr. Reilly said. "The community came to me. I submitted the bill contingent on the developer meeting (the covenants)."

However, members of the Lee Airport Conservancy Board, which represents 1,000 households in five nearby Edgewater neighborhoods, say the developer, Regency Centers, has resolved all their concerns.

Joan Scott, who helped to cobble together covenants controlling the property's development over the last seven years, said politics are at play in Mr. Reilly's decision.

"He has been supportive all along," she said. "We met with him. He told us on several occasions he could get the bill through. There was no problem with it passing.

"Frankly, I think Ed Reilly has really paid attention to the naysayers. You will always have naysayers, but there comes a time when it is important that you listen to the greater group. And we have resolved these issues."

The shopping center plan requires that a service road along Route 2 and a pond built by the State Highway Administration be moved. They're in the middle of the site proposed for the shopping center.

Mr. Reilly's bill, submitted Aug. 7, would allow the county to accept land from the state where the road and stormwater pond sit and then give it to the Lees. The Lees, in turn, would give land to the county for a new service road and storm pond.

In May the conservancy sent Mr. Reilly a letter, asking him to support four issues before the land transfer takes place. Mr. Reilly cited two as his reasons for pulling the bill:

Stormwater management must be designed and operated to protect local waterways, and

runoff should be treated by bio-retention and infiltration techniques.

The maximum impervious surface area should not exceed 54 percent, as designated in the covenant. Calculations need to verify that fact.

Mr. Reilly said Regency Centers has yet to spell out how it will monitor or measure the storm water coming off the property to guarantee that it meets the standards set.

But Ross Vorhees, conservancy chairman, said the project has significant stormwater infiltration on the site and his group is satisfied they got more than the county requires.

He also said that based on the group's calculations, the developer has meet the 54 percent designation even though the amount of land involved has grown because of the land swap.

"The conservancy has accepted the latest revision plans for the Village at Lee Farm," he said. "The issues are resolved."

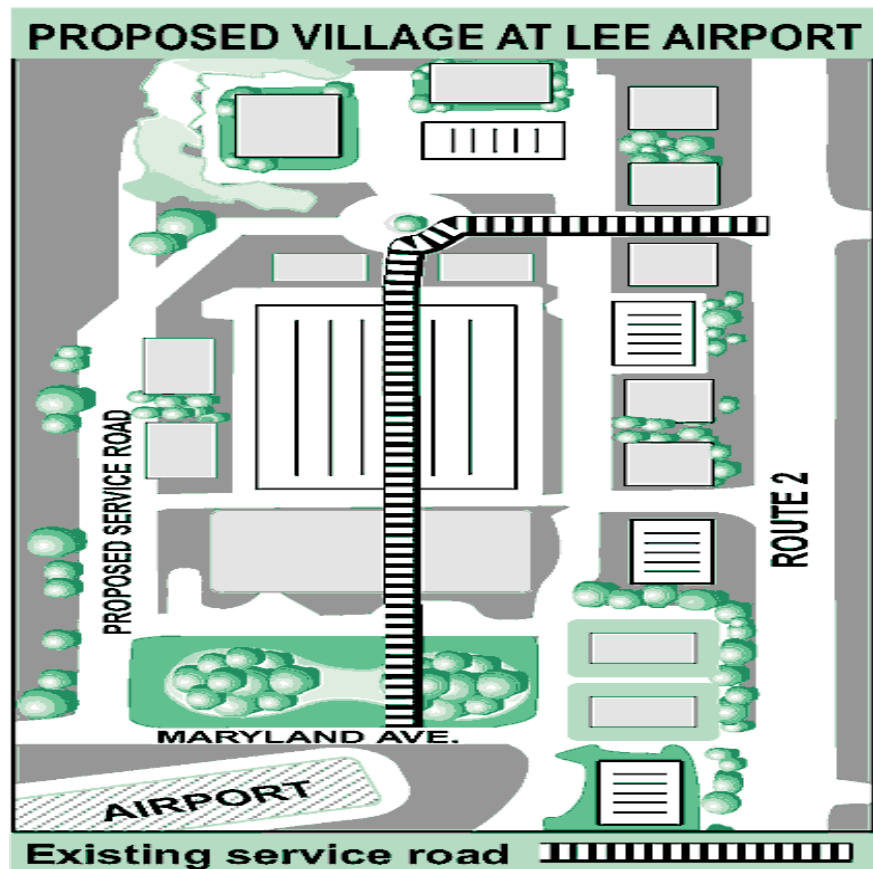
David Simison, attorney for the Lee family, said the developer is willing to try to meet Mr. Reilly's concerns about monitoring storm water. He reiterated that the plan meets stormwater goals for the project.

"The covenants exceed the county's requirements," he said. "This plan exceed the covenants."

He said the upcoming election is a factor in the decision to pull the bill.

"Given how close these elections are, someone might make something out of it ...," he said. "Someone might make an issue that Mr. Reilly, or others running for office, are rushing development through."

Mark Huffman, spokesman for Regency Centers on the project, couldn't be reached for comment.



Ms. Scott, resigned to the prospect of a delay, said, "I guess we'll see what happens after the election."

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