

The Capital South County

High's store under way in Deale

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

After some concessions to a local environmental organization, a convenience store is sprouting up in Deale. High's, at the intersection of Routes 256 and 258, will include the fourth gas station in the community, but South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development backed the project after the company agreed to negotiate some details

"High's was a model of an effort by a business to work with us and the community," SACReD President Amanda Spake said. "They were really terrific to work with." The project includes a 2,881-square-foot store with three gas pumping islands covered by a 4,000-square-foot canopy and parking for 23 cars

High's of Baltimore, owned by the Darnell family of Annapolis, agreed:

- Not to develop anything else on the 4-acre property and to put about 2 acres in permanent easement
- To create a landscape buffer along the road frontage to block some view of the store
- To make the canopy the same height as the building and not to post the gasoline brand on it.
- To use an architectural style more suitable for the community.

"We were able to reach agreement of a number of points," said High's Vice President Brian Darnell. "We are progressing slowly but surely . . . (and) hope to be open by April." The site's C3 commercial zoning allows a gas station as a special exception, which requires a hearing. High's met that requirement last year

High's of Baltimore, which operates 90 stores, would keep the Deale location open daily from 5:30 a.m. to 11 p.m

But there is some question whether the community needs a new convenience store and gas station two doors down from a 7-Eleven that also sells fuel. The new chain store would be the type of development some Deale residents

fear, because they envision a hodgepodge of businesses with absentee franchise owners, capable of wiping out family-owned establishments

"Most people think the High's is unnecessary," said Anne Wolfe of the Alliance for Rural Business

Others think it's a needed business development serving the needs of a growing community. Claire Mallicote of the Deale Merchants Association thinks the High's should be built, if for no other reason than to support property rights.

"If the property is zoned for it, it is their right," she said. "Without planned commercial growth . . . you are going to get anything and everything here. Hey, if it is zoned right, let them build it, whether we need it or not."

Other people worry about the runoff from the property. Charter boat captain George Prenant wonders about the stormwater runoff into a wetland at the rear of the property on Deale Beach Road. "My livelihood depends on clean water in the bay," he said. "They are draining that construction site into a ditch that runs right into wetlands."

County land-use spokesman Pam Jordan explained that stormwater will first be caught in a pond, and any excess water will run through a pipe that slows the flow into an existing swale that would normally drain the property.

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