

# The Journal



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## Quarry rezoning draws concern

■ A public hearing attracted more than 100 citizens. Many oppose the project.

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CHARLES TOWN — A rezoning request from the developers of a controversial business project attracted comments about the need for jobs as well as concerns about traffic congestion and historic preservation in a hearing Tuesday night.

The Jefferson County Planning Commission set the public hearing in order to gain comments about

the plans for commercial development on the Old Standard Quarry property, and whether rezoning the property would be in compliance with the county's comprehensive plan.

Planning commissioners will decide for or against a rezoning recommendation during their regular meeting at 7 p.m. next Tuesday, and then the County Commission will make the ultimate decision on the project a few weeks later.

The Old Standard LLC project site is south of U.S. 340, and plans call for a 60,000-square-foot signature office building, a 150-room hotel with a 22,500-square-foot conference center and additional

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File photo

The Old Standard Quarry property in Jefferson County was once an industrial site and home to a landfill. Its current owners hope to build a commercial development and hotel. See CU.

# Quarry

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office buildings along the property's lake and the Shenandoah River. Twenty acres of the site would be dedicated as parkland, which could be used for hiking and biking trails, as well as public fishing areas.

The business development and hotel will bring much needed high paying jobs and a commercial tax base to the county, according to attorney Jim Campbell, of Campbell, Miller and Zimmerman in Charles Town, which is representing the developers.

However, many of the people who spoke against the project said they feared the new commercial buildings would threaten an area where Civil War soldiers marched, as well as the scenic beauty of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, which owns some of the property adjacent to the Old Standard site.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Superintendent Don Campbell said part of the property lies in the area where the largest surrender of Union troops took place in September 1862. "... development, in the core of the park's historic and scenic setting, threatens loss of a Civil War battlefield and desecration of the park's scenery," he said.

Joy Oakes, senior Mid-Atlantic regional director of the National Parks Conservation Association,

said before the hearing that she thinks the project's impact on the park's views, as well as increased traffic, are both big concerns.

"It's an area that already has some traffic (problems) and the traffic generated from this development would be very difficult" for park visitors and area motorists, she said. "They (tourists) are there for the beauty — not the traffic."

The property's owners, Herb Jonkers and Eugene Capriotti, would pay for a new traffic signal at U.S. 340 and its intersection with Millville Road, as well as a new four-lane access road.

The Old Standard Quarry property consists of about 411 acres, which fall into two zoning districts. About 80 acres in the north part of the property are zoned for high density residential use, while the remaining section is in the rural district.

The rezoning petition requests that the County Commission change the property's zoning to allow for commercial use, claiming that the current zoning is a mistake that needs to be corrected. Since the old quarry was active from the 1880s through 1970s and used as an industrial site, the petition claims the property has never been suitable for the rural district. The old quarry has crumbling buildings and contains piles of burnt limestone, and part of the

property was once the site of the county's old landfill.

The owners would also pay for cleaning up the limestone and other materials left behind on the former industrial site, Jim Campbell said.

He also said the rezoning petition does fall in with the comprehensive plan's intentions, especially in regard to promoting growth and development that are economically and environmentally sound, and encouraging economic development so that residents can live and work in Jefferson County.

"It creates 6,000 new jobs," he said, adding that those jobs would be high-tech, white-collar jobs, in addition to thousands of construction jobs, and would reduce the number of people who commute outside of the county.

Under current zoning, 1,634 homes could be built on one section of the property.

Car dealership owner Gary Chicchirichi urged county leaders to support the project because of the need for more jobs in the area. He said he sees too many people commuting more than an hour away, and they don't get home until after 7 p.m.

"I'd like the next generation to be able to live here and work here," he said, adding that he loves Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, but preservation efforts and economic development need to be better balanced.

Jefferson County Economic Development Authority Executive Director Jane Peters agreed the county needs more commercial development.

"Working to attract these types of jobs to the county is something I do every day," Peters said, adding that the Development Authority has a large database of county residents who commute to the Washington metropolitan area. Of those workers, 85 percent would prefer to work closer to their homes if more jobs were available, she said.

Jim Campbell and Don Campbell each made 10-minute presentations and then answered questions from planning commissioners. All other people who spoke during the hearing were given three minutes to present their opinions.

The Planning Commission meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. next Tuesday will be in the lower level meeting room of the Old Charles Town Library, which is the same room where the hearing took place.