

# The Journal



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## JEFFERSON COUNTY

# Board weighs in on quarry

## Group says commercial rezoning request is not compatible with comprehensive plan

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JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

CHARLES TOWN — Although Jefferson County planning commissioners decided that a rezoning petition for a controversial commercial project does not meet county land-use guidelines, the issue isn't over yet.

The Planning Commission's recommendation in regard to the rezoning request for the Old Standard Quarry property south of U.S. 340 will go before the Jefferson County Commission for ultimate approval or denial in coming weeks, possibly during next week's regular Thursday meeting or

soon after.

During Tuesday night's regular Planning Commission meeting, members decided unanimously that the rezoning petition from the owners of the Old Standard Quarry property is not compatible with the county's comprehensive plan. The plan is a land-use planning document that sets a range of guidelines for county leaders.

Planning commissioners accepted public comments on the rezoning petition until June 5, when the board had a public hearing. Comments ranged from concern over traffic increases and backups on U.S. 340, to concerns about the project's impact on historic Civil War sites and the

views from adjacent Harpers Ferry National Historical Park property. Those in favor of the project said Jefferson County needs more upscale commercial projects and the thousands of potential jobs that could be created.

After weighing public comments and reviewing the land-use guidelines, the Planning Commission decided 7-0 that the petition request does not meet the county's comprehensive plan. Members Tom Kane and Ellen May were absent.

Planning Commissioner Edward Dunleavy said there was a lot of discussion about all the issues, but it came down to the basic question of whether rezoning the

property from high density residential to allow for commercial uses would meet the intentions of the comprehensive plan.

"It was obvious ... it was not consistent with the comprehensive plan," Dunleavy said on Wednesday. He said that encouraging economic development is one portion of the comprehensive plan, but there were many other guidelines that call for the protection of natural viewpoints, historical sites, etc.

The Old Standard Quarry property consists of about 411 acres, which fall into two zoning districts. About 80 acres in the

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# Quarry

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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, 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 burned limestone, and part of the property was once the site of the county's old landfill.

Project 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 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 attorneys Jim Campbell and Mike Cassell, of Campbell, Miller and Zimmerman in Charles Town, the firm representing the developers.

Cassell could not be reached for comment Wednesday afternoon, but he and Campbell have said recently that they do believe that the rezoning petition meets 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.

The next step is for the County Commission to decide whether to rezone the property, and that might happen next week.

The Jefferson County Commission meets at 9:30 a.m. today, and more information about upcoming meetings is available by calling (304) 728-3284.

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