

The Journal



SATURDAY
June 30, 2007

Serving the Eastern Counties of West Virginia Since 1907

50 cents

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Old battleground host to new fight over ground

By CHRIS BROWN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

HARPERS FERRY — Park Service leaders wanted to hold the high ground in a discussion over the proposed re-zoning of the Old Standard Quarry, the development of which they said would damage the vista of the park.

In fact, their argument was completely based on terrain.

On Friday, the National Park Service invited county commissioners, other area politicians and the quarry project developers to tour the areas in the

park whose views would possibly be affected if the Old Standard Quarry is re-zoned for commercial development by the Jefferson County Commission.

Dennis Frye, chief historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, argued that the terrain of Bolivar Heights and School House Ridge; upon which the Old Standard Quarry property sits, was key to Gen. Stonewall Jackson's strategy during the Civil War Battle of Harpers Ferry.

Developer Herb Jonkers, one of the owners of the property in question, argued several times with Frye

See BATTLEGROUND A2



Harpers Ferry National Park historian Dennis Frye describes the importance of the Old Standard Quarry's terrain to assembled county commissioners, Bolivar Town Council members, conservationists and developer Herb Jonkers. Journal photo by Chris Brown

Battleground FROM PAGE A1

over which route Jackson would have taken during the battle, and just how significant or pristine the terrain was in relation to the history of the area.

NPS have made it clear that they oppose the re-zoning of the park, because they fear it would jeopardize the view and historic value of the area, the terrain of which is key to understanding the battle of Harpers Ferry, they said.

"Re-zoning for commercial development in the core of the National Park would be — in our opinion — an egregious error," Park Superintendent Don Campbell said.

Campbell also argued that the scale of the development, which he described as 2.3 million square feet, would be disruptive to the view and integrity of the park.

Jonkers countered that he and fellow owner Gene Capriotti have no plans to build above the tree canopy, and as long as no building peaks over the tree line, there would be no damage to the park.

"Scale isn't the important thing. It's elevation behind the trees," he said.

Still, despite the disagreements

on historic interpretation, Frye characterized the relationship between the park and the developers as amiable, and even went so far as to refer to them as a "willing seller," legal language which implies that they would be willing to sell their property to the National Park.

It was unclear if the park service has made an offer to buy the land.

"We're not an interested seller, but we will give it consideration," Jonkers said.

He added that he and Capriotti were flexible in their plans for the property, and their only real disagreement with the park was over whether those plans could move forward.

County Commission President Frances Morgan called the issue a sensitive one, and though she said she was struck by the beauty of the park and the Old Standard property, which the commission toured earlier in the week, the developers' rights as property owners deserved protection as well.

"The commission needs to be very careful about things," she said.