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Ben Lomond Slave Quarters About To Give Way for Church Driveway

By DAVE ROMAN
JM Staff Writer

A 19th century stone slave house is about to be demolished to make way for a driveway if a site plan submitted to Prince William County is approved. According to the proposal submitted to the county, the former slave house located on Sudley Manor Drive across from Ben Lomond Community Center is scheduled to be demolished because it is in the way of a proposed entrance to the parking lot for the soon-to-be constructed Westover Baptist Church.

The small stone dwelling was once part of the Ben Lomond Estate, which was and may have originally served as a honeymoon cottage, started in the late 18th or early 19th centuries, according to Frances Jones, architectural historian-surveyor for the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission. The house sits on the corner of a 5-acre parcel of land adjacent to Ben Lomond Manor.

The Prince William County Park Authority has "strongly" recommended that the Prince William County Planning Department defer approving the church's building plans until provisions are made "for the preservation of the historic slave

quarters," according to documents shown to the Journal Messenger. Jones is also seeking alternatives to the church's demolition of the former slave house.

Westover Baptist Church Reverend Alfred Philley says the church has offered the house to the Historical Society or any other group that is willing to move it or disassemble it and reassemble it elsewhere. If no one takes the house, it will be demolished, he said.

"We do not have the money to restore it," Philley said. "We can't afford to make the thing usable."

One of the proposed alternatives to demolishing the structure that was presented to the church is to curve the driveway around the house, but Philley opposes that because he said it would detract from the beauty of the church.

"It can be done," he said. "But it's sitting right in the area where the driveway is supposed to go. It would have to have a retaining wall for one thing, and for another, it would be sitting right in front of our building."

Philley announced to the Prince William County Historical Society in mid-January that the church planned

to demolish the building. In a second meeting on the subject, Philley offered the building freed of charge to anyone willing to move it from its present location, but that could cost up to \$20,000, according to Jones, who has already contacted a professional mover about the subject.

"I think they're just being pig-headed about it," Jones said. "They haven't considered any possible alternative uses for the building. They can't imagine anything detracting from their own monolithic building."

Jones suggested that the church use the building as either an office, as a children's club house, or as a storage shed. She said it would cost about \$5,000 to completely restore the building. The walls and roof are sound, according to Jones.

"They don't want a building associated with slaves," Jones said. "If we could find some way to prove it was a chapel or a school, they would probably jump at it."

Philley denied that the church wanted to rid itself of the building because of its slave connotations.

"The fact that it was a slave house has nothing to do with it," he said. "I hate to see it torn down, but we don't



Robert Dutton—The Journal Messenger

The Westover Baptist Church would like to tear down a historic slave quarters (rear) on Sudley Manor Drive in order to construct its building.

have the money to move it or restore it. We bought the land to build a church on."

To keep the house in its present location would require the church to build its proposed driveway 20 feet

either to the left or right of the structure. That would also mean that a 30-foot retaining wall three-feet high would have to be built to prevent erosion. Philley said the church didn't want to pay for a retaining wall, which

would cost about \$3,000.

Other proposals for saving the building include:

—moving the building across Sudley Manor Drive to a site beside Ben Lomond Manor.
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School

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He was the only board member that voted in favor of his motion however, and it was defeated, 6-1.

Even after the successful 6-1 vote on Helton's proposal, Saunders, who cast the lone opposing vote, refused to give up. He suggested that the school staff explore the idea of running express school buses on main highways during bad weather and hold school for those children who could make it in.

As early as September of last year the school staff had offered a proposal to extend the year-round calendar enough to put six snow days in the bank, but the board opted to lengthen the day only long enough for three snow days.

At the outset of Wednesday's discussion on the matter, Saunders wanted to delay board action another week. It was delayed last week because the board members said they resented having the makeup proposal, which was finally adopted this week, given to them the same day that a decision was needed.

School Boardman George Mullen, Coles Magisterial District, nipped the delay tactic tactic in the bud, however.

"Mr. Saunders has some good suggestions but in pursuing them I would not want us to incur the wrath of the State Department," Mullen said. "Last week we held up doing anything for a week and we seem to be holding up the staff's effort to get started making up these days. When we (the board) pop up with these new things, Mr. Saunders, it takes staff time to check it out."

Mullen, whose four-year term on the School Board expires Tuesday, apparently was still smarting from the board's refusal earlier Wednesday to consider recommendations made by the Board Policy Committee because the material only became available the same day as the meeting. Mullen was chairman of that committee.

If any of Saunderson's counterproposals on makeup days were to be given serious consideration, Mullen seemed to anticipate that the board

is out of the way of the proposed driveway entrance.

—moving the building 100 feet onto the Ben Lomond Manor property.

—exchanging parcels of land with the church.

The latest proposal was made by Manassas Associates, owners of the Ben Lomond Manor property adjoining the church's property. Manassas Associates offered to exchange 6.8 acres of land below the church's 5.8 acre parcel, but the church declined the offer. The lower parcel has less buildable land and is subject to flooding, according to Philley.

"At this point it doesn't seem practical," Philley said. "We spent \$3,000 for a site plan and we have a projected building for this lot. We just don't have the money to go through that thing again. We'd be in or near a flood plain, and if there was ever another flood like the last one, we would be under water."

About 1970 Ben Lomond Manor was offered to the Parks and Recreation Department to preserve as an historical landmark, according to letters shown to the Journal Messenger. But no action was ever taken, and it is not clear if that original offer still stands. A spokesman for Ridge Development, the company that allegedly made the offer, could not be reached for comment.

Under that proposal the Parks and Recreation Department planned to use the manor house as a link between Ben Lomond Community Center and 26 acres of open land located behind Stonewall Jackson Middle School and Sinclair Elementary School. Under an agreement with the Prince William County School District, the Parks and Recreation Department will maintain the area for recreational and sports uses.

Federal regulations require state and local governmental agencies to meet federal archaeological requirements, but private developers operate free of such restrictions, according to a Park Authority memo, Jones said. Prince William County does have a historical District Ordinance but has never tested it in court, said Jones.

"If there's enough time, we plan to nominate it to the National Registry of Historic Places," she said.

The Ben Lomond Estate, was probably used as a hospital in the Civil War, according to historical documents.

"If it has archaeological value then the federal government has another reason to protect it," said Jones.

The Prince William County Construction Services Department said it has not yet issued a building permit for the church.

Ben Lomond was named for a mountain located on the east side of Lake of Loch Lomond in central Scotland. Ben Lomond Estate originally spread across more than 5,000 acres of Prince William and Fairfax Counties.

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Davis Ford Road.

But the applicant agreed instead to keep that road closed and have an entrance off of Laurel Hill Drive, which is under construction, and the residents supported the change.

Among other action, the commissioners recommended denial of a rezoning of three acres on Interstate Drive to heavy industrial.

Milligan said that he thought the piecemeal development of the Townsend property which includes this three acres had not been done in such a way as to provide adequate services to the area.

Public water presently does not serve the site and the fire marshal stated in the staff report that wells were inadequate for fire protection.

"The amount proffered will not be sufficient to pay for the public facilities needed to serve the proposed industrial facilities along Interstate Drive," the staff stated. "As industrial development occurs it will be necessary to spend public funds to provide appropriate highway and water facilities to this area."

The commissioners recommended approval of rezoning two acres on Telegraph Road near Horner Road to heavy industrial for an auto body shop. The area is considered suitable for industrial development and the applications plan was considered acceptable.

The commissioners recommendations are advisory to the Board of County Supervisors, which make the final decision.

Slave

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Lomond Community Center.

—moving the building 20 feet to the edge of the church's property line so it

Reward Fund Hits \$40

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Prince series of locations are aimed at acquainting the operation.

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