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## Officials want to revive 1800s church

### Supervisors want structure to join complex

By MATTHEW COX  
of the Potomac News

BRENTSVILLE — Gladys Eanes will never forget her wedding day. The tiny country church was decorated in dahlias and ferns her mother had gathered from local gardens for the ceremony on Sept. 26, 1948.

During the past 39 years, Eanes, whose husband died in 1989, has watched as decades of neglect have slowly consumed that memory.

"It was kept up and neat and pretty then — just a little country church," said the 68-year-old Brentsville native, who lives directly across from the abandoned Brentsville Union Church on Bristow Road.

The paint is cracked and peeling, sections of trim and shutters have disappeared and the steps are barely visible under the vast network of creeping vegetation.

"It looks like it could use some tender, loving care," she said Thursday.

The late 1800s church could get just that if Prince William County officials get their way.

The Board of County Supervisors voted this week to offer to buy the church and make it a part of the historic Brentsville Courthouse complex — a renovation project consisting of the

1822 courthouse and jail that made Brentsville the center for county government until 1894.

The complex also includes a one-room schoolhouse constructed in 1928. Officials believe the schoolhouse was built on the foundation of the former county clerk's office, which was destroyed during the Civil War.

"I think it is really important, and I think it is exciting that we have a ... Board of Supervisors that can appreciate the value of this quaint church," said Prince William County Historical Commission member Jan Cunard, who also serves as the chairwoman for the Friends of the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre. The group was formed to raise donations and assist in the project's renovation.

The supervisors have agreed to offer the owners, Negmeh Tayebe and Parto Hadian, their asking price of \$25,000.

The only problem is that a separate party placed a contract on the property in mid-May, an obstacle that may force the county to condemn the property if a deal cannot be worked out.

"It may have to go to court," said Bob Wilson, the county's director of public works. "We always try to negotiate. If negotiations [fail], there may be reasons why it is in everybody's best interest to go to court."

Sandra M. Morris-Flynn, 56, who has lived next to the church since 1971, said she placed a contract on the prop-

erty because she wanted to see it restored.

"It is a shame to just let it sit there and fall down," she said.

Despite agreeing with the county's intentions, she said she's unsure how the issue will be worked out since the county has not approached her about the issue.

In fact, she's not sure about the status of her own contract, which she said she submitted for another party. Morris-Flynn would not reveal the name of that person.

"I would hope the owners would realize the value of the property and agree to sell it to the county for the asking price," said Cunard, who was unable to estimate its potential value.

"It is almost impossible to put a figure on such a historic property."

The Brentsville Courthouse renovation has been supported by a \$25,000 grant from state Sen. Charles Colgan, D-Prince William, which the supervisors agreed to match as part of the fiscal 1998 budget.

An application also has been filed for \$580,000 in funding through the federal government's Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act. Cunard said the project meets the criteria for such funding because Brentsville was a major crossroads for transportation from 1822 to 1894.

If the request is granted this summer, \$45,000 of the grant would come from the county and the Park Authority along with \$100,000 in funds raised

by the Friends of the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is scheduled to evaluate the complex this month to determine how to restore it, Cunard said. For now, she said, the goal is to stabilize the buildings so they do not continue to deteriorate.

"It is going to be an evolving process that will take a number of years," Cunard said.

Supervisor Ben Thompson, R-Brentsville, said creating such a "village concept" could mean a new attraction for tourists in addition to sites like the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

"I think it will do a good bit eventually for tourism," he said. "It could be a real living history project."

Carol North, who has lived two doors down from the church since 1989, also was excited about the idea of restoring the church.

North, the former pastor of the Presbyterian church's new location just down the road, said she usually doesn't support government seizures of private land but could support this exception.

"That is one of the few cases I am in favor of that process — to restore a historic building. I am all for preserving old buildings," she said, adding that she thought the church's addition to the historic complex would be an asset to the area.

"It would be nice if it could be used for church again, for weddings and things like that. I would love to be able to do little

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by the Friends of the Brevintille Courthouse Historic Center. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is scheduled to evaluate the complex this month to determine how to restore it. Curran said. For now, she said, the goal is to stabilize the buildings so they do not continue to deteriorate. It is going to be an ongoing process that will take a number of years, Curran said. Supervisor Ben Thompson, Brevintille, said that such a large project could mean a new station for the bus line in the area to serve the historic Courthouse National Historic Park. I think it will be a good bit of money for the area, he said. In the past, the area had history. Curran, who has lived in the area since 1988, said she was born in the area and was the daughter of a pastor of the church. North is the former pastor of the 18th-century church's new location just down the road and she usually visits the site and the nearby historic site. The site is one of the oldest and is in part of that in the area. I am all for the revival of old buildings, she said, and she said she would like to see the historic complex restored as an asset to the area. Curran said she would like to see the site used for the historic site and that she would like to see the site used for the historic site.

she wanted to see ceremonies in there." Eanes said her husband, A.V. Eanes, would have been as "delighted" as she is over the county's plans. "I'm 100 percent for it because I know they will take care of it," she said. In fact, she's not sure about the status of her own contact which she said she submitted for another party. Morris-Egan would not reveal the name of that person. I would hope the county would feature the site of the property and agree to sell the property for the historic site, said Curran, who was unable to estimate its potential value. It is indeed impressive. It is a site on such a historic part of the area. The Brevintille Courthouse renovation is a \$250,000 project. A \$250,000 renovation state Sen. Charles Ladd, D-Prince William, said he supports the request to match as part of the local 1998 budget. An application also has been filed for \$550,000 in funding through the local government. The application is a joint effort of the county and the state. Curran said the project meets the criteria for such funding because Brevintille was a major transportation hub from 1820 to 1884. If the request is granted, an estimated \$100,000 of the cost would come from the county and the Park Authority, which has \$100,000 in funds, and

1822 courthouse and still that made Brevintille the county government. The county government is a one-room building situated in 1828. Officials believe the building was built on the site of the former county clerk's office which was destroyed during the Civil War. I think it is really important and I think it is exciting that we have a... Board of Supervisors that can appreciate the value of this outstanding historical Commission member Jan Curran, who also serves as the chairwoman for the Friends of the Brevintille Courthouse Historic Center. The group was formed to raise money for the restoration. It was kept up and well and party time - just a little county church, said the 85-year-old Brevintille native, who is asking for the site. The only trouble is that a separate party placed a road on the property in mid-1980s, she said, that may have been a mistake. The county is not sure if the county can be worked on. It will have to go to court, she said. Bob Wilson, the county's director of public works, always is in negotiable. He negotiates if the state may be involved. Why is it in everybody's best interest to go to court? Sandra M. Morris-Egan, 50, who has lived next to the church since 1971, said she placed a contact on the prop-

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