

PWC - Bristoe Station

HISTORIC SITE FILE: BRISTOE STATION BATTLEFIELD  
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## County delays Bristoe Station grant

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The county supervisors' decision to delay applying for a grant that would shape future development at Bristoe Station Battlefield drew a swirl of criticism from preservationists Tuesday.

The Prince William Board of County Supervisors withdrew from consideration a \$51,328 grant application for the historic area due to a lack of notification of property owners in the area where more than 100,000 Union and Confederate troops clashed in the fall of 1863.

The grant application with the American Battlefield Protection Program was due Dec. 31.

"We have lost an opportunity for an entire year to do anything to resolve the differences of opinion there are among a lot of people about the historical signifi-

cance of this area," Martha Henley of Manassas said after the board pulled the item from its agenda.

The land covering the Bristoe Station battlefield is privately owned, which has caused the county to step lightly in the past when forming land use policy.

The county officials had hoped to build consensus among preservationists and land owners on what should be done with the area by having an historian map out the significance of each parcel.

"This was a difficult decision to make," Prince William Planning Director Rick Lawson said. "We failed to include in preparing the grant application all of the participants that could have been involved with this."

Over the past 10 years, the county has had to balance the issues of property rights and historic preservation in framing land

use policy in the Bristoe Station area located about a mile west of Manassas Regional Airport along Bristow Road.

In October of 1863, a portion of the Army of Northern Virginia under Gen. A.P. Hill engaged federal forces at Bristoe Station in what proved to be the final major southern offensive of the Civil War.

"The area of Bristoe Station Battlefield for the past 135 years has been treated just like a plain area," former Gainesville Supervisor Bobbi McManus said.

McManus viewed the grant application by the county as a means of sanctioning the construction of a future town center in the area. "Prince William County — the county that looks at Potomac Mills as a national treasure — wants to plan a town center development. That doesn't surprise me," McManus said.

McManus said last month

that she is a Republican candidate for the Gainesville Supervisor seat running against incumbent Ed Wilbourn on a slow growth platform.

In 1994, a cultural resource plan was adopted for the area that calls for historical research prior to new developments and for developments that are within the historic character of the area.

The exact location of historically sensitive sites in the area have been at the center of debate, part of which was to be settled with funds from the battlefield grant.

Brentsville Supervisor Ben Thompson, R-Brentsville, took issue with those who believed the county was insensitive to historic preservation.

"Historic preservation on county property is alive and well in Prince William County and has had the full support of this board," Thompson said.