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# Tough job: supervisors face conflicts with out-of-date zoning

PWC-ZONING

Editor's note: This is another in a continuing series of articles on subjects that have been in the news in the past. If you have a subject for Update, call 670-8151.

By GARY CRAIG  
of the Potomac News

One of the toughest tasks faced by the next board of supervisors may be resolving conflicts between zonings approved decades ago and zonings called for in the 1985 comprehensive plan, board members say.

At stake is the quality of life for thousands of Prince William residents who live near land zoned 10 to 30 years ago.

In some cases, such as on Possum Point, land zoned for industry and business

should be used for low-density housing, the comprehensive plan says.

In another case, 37 acres in Nokesville that is zoned for heavy industry should be zoned for agriculture, the plan says.

County planners in the spring brought supervisors a report identifying 45 parcels where more than 10,230 homes and almost 16 million square feet of commercial, office and industrial space could be built under long-standing zoning, called "stale" zoning.

The comprehensive plan recommends changes in each of those parcels.

The county's aim has been to align the out-of-date land uses with zoning in the comprehensive plan, last revised in 1985.



But with players in the land-use game changing — four new supervisors take office Jan. 1 and Planning Director Roger Snyder has left his post — officials are questioning whether the initiative will stall.

John Schofield, the new planning direc-

tor, said Wednesday the stale zoning initiative is not dead.

The stale zoning report "was one of the last things Roger put in my hands," Schofield said.

He said he familiarized himself with the report and let the new supervisors know that it is available.

Supervisor Edwin King, D-Dumfries, said he thinks the new board will follow up on the initiative, but he isn't sure what steps the board will take.

King and colleague Don Kidwell have said the initiative might take them straight to court. Downzoning, which occurs when governments reduce the maximum densi-

ties zoned land, can prompt landowners to sue, they said.

"Frankly, I expect lawsuits, if in fact we downzone some of this," King said last spring.

Snyder and County Attorney John Foote maintained the county could legally alter the zoning on the land if the changes were consistent across the county.

Woodbridge lawyer C. Lacey Compton Jr., a development attorney, said several of his clients who owned land identified in the stale zoning report have been waiting to see what action the county takes.

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REFERENCE

VIRGINIANA FILE

Prince William Public Library  
Manassas, Va.

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"I think the owners of those parcels are hoping it will go away," Compton said. "I don't know if it will."

Schofield and others say the initiative will not go away.

One reason the stale zoning plan has disappeared from the public spotlight is that many owners of land in the report have agreed to cut densities on the property without challenging the report.

Some land owners have agreed to pay for roads and other public improvements if the county will leave old zonings in place.

"They have been willing to deal with it as if they were making prof-fers," King said.

Snyder said Wednesday that many developers "saw the wisdom of trying to cut a deal."