

FREESTONE POINT? A NEW COUNTY PARK?

By BETTY CALVIN

A new wrinkle in the adoption of the Powell's Planning Area development plan came to light Thursday when the Prince William Board of Supervisors discussed the advantages of locating a county park at Freestone Point.

Because of disagreement over how much of the plan should be adopted and for what purposes, decisions were once again postponed, this time until Sept. 9.

Freestone Point contains about 500 acres and has been owned for many years by the American-Hawaiian Steamship Co. It at one time was the site of elaborate recreational facilities with a walkway leading out into the water to a gambling boat. Known as one of the most beautiful pieces of undeveloped property in Northern Virginia, the site has been described as "the only possible location for a county park on the Potomac River."

Originally mentioned in the county-wide master plan, "Open Spaces 1990," submitted to the Board of Supervisors in 1970 by the Parks and Recreation Department, the park plan is a development scheme which incorporates revenue producing facilities such as a golf course, a marina for small boats, a miniature railway and a campground.

THE ENTIRE 500 acres could be acquired and

Fredericksburg and Potomac railway tracks. This part contains the actual site of the Leesylvania Plantation, the home of the grandparents of Robert E. Lee and the birthplace of "Light Horse Harry" Lee, a Revolutionary War hero and a former governor of Virginia; Charles Lee, a former attorney general of the United States; Richard Bland Lee, the first Congressman from Northern Virginia; Edmund Jennings Lee, mayor of Alexandria; and other members of the Henry Lee family.

The property also contains the Lee-Fairfax cemetery; the home of Henry Fairfax; and the site of Civil War gun emplacements which were located at the tip of the point to control Yankee shipping to and from Washington.

The design of the park involves day use and weekend facilities for total family recreational opportunities. It would include a day camp area for the Scouts, church and civic groups, athletic fields for adults and youth; an amphitheater for educational and recreational purposes; a children's zoo to be built with money raised through private donations; and a nature center and nature-historical trail system. The existing pools at the site probably could be renovated at far less cost than the price of a new pool.

The present access to the point is under the railway trestle which spans Powell's

residents. Persons in vehicles with county or town tags would be admitted free of charge.

RAY VADEN, parks and recreation director, told the supervisors Thursday that the owners of the property were contacted in November of 1970 and were interested in seeing the property become a county park. "This is the only site available and the owner is amenable," he explained.

Henry Bibber, assistant planning director, frowned on the possibility that only part of the Powell's Plan would be adopted at this time. "It's all or nothing; act on all of it or leave it all in abeyance," he advised.

Dr. A.J. Ferlazzo, Dumfries District, noted that an "ultra condominium high rise, like Watergate" might be built on this site. "I don't want it designated for a park until I see what the owners want to do," he said.

Izaak Walton leader Tom Yowell of Brentsville opposed this possibility. "This is the only property on the river that could be used for a county or regional park; it could be a revenue-producing park for the park authority," he said.

C. Lacey Compton, Manassas lawyer, and one of the lawyers representing the Cafritz' family, the major land holder in the Powell's area, grumbled that the plan had been pending for two years. "We want a resolution of what and how the land is going to be developed." He urged that at least the part lying between U.S. 1 and the railway be okayed.

Richard Nageotte, Woodbridge attorney representing the Nelson family, which owns a 200-acre parcel within the planning area, said, "All our consideration is based on a completed plan; it does not have to be inflexible, however."

FERLAZZO SAID HE FEARED that a park would make swimming in the river more attractive. "The water is dangerous there; about a half a dozen people have drowned in the currents."

Edwin Brown, a candidate for the Occoquan supervisor's post, spoke up in support of Vaden. "We'll have a park and recreation authority within a month; it will need desirable land sites for revenue-producing facilities."

Seeking support for a

motion section railway, hinted affect proper Andre Distr separati

Dog obedience classes

The Prince William County Parks and Recreation

beginning in September.

Mrs. Patricia Brinkley will

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years, and anchored her a few feet off the shore at Freestone Point. A big pier leading from the shore to the boat, paved the way for those Virginians rushing headlong into perdition.

Permit Power Revoked

After much outcry from temperance circles, the Maryland Legislature finally took away the Charles County's power to permit drinking and gambling on the river.

The syndicate went bankrupt, despite some \$14 million spent in development of a large recreational complex which included a miniature railroad, several swimming pools, and other amusements. Apparently the other attractions failed to draw customers without the gambling and drinks.

The notoriety of Freestone Point, dating from that time, tended to overshadow its more illustrious history.

Some officials of the Lee Society of Virginia feel it is their "ancestral plantation."

Mrs. Eleanor Lee Templeman, secretary of the Society of the Lees of Virginia, said the early members of the Lee family established their family's home, "Leesylvania," on a large tract of land on Freestone Point.

The grandparents of General Robert E. Lee lived there and are buried there. Adjacent to the Lee graveyard there is a Fairfax family graveyard, where many members of the family Fairfax County is named for are buried. The Fairfax family bought the Leesylvania plantation in 1825.

Shipline Bought Land

Later, the land was sold to other interests. The latest in a long line of owners is the Hawaiian-American Steamship line, controlled by shipping magnate Daniel K. Ludwig.

Alexandria real estate broker Robert Duncan said the land once again is for sale. He said the owners were interested in having it become a park, "but want a reasonable return on their investment."

He declined to comment on what price the owners wanted for the land, and county officials said it would be up to them to negotiate a fair price.

Ray Vaden, county park and recreation director, said the several swimming pools there could easily be repaired and put into use. He said this would be cheaper than building completely new facilities.

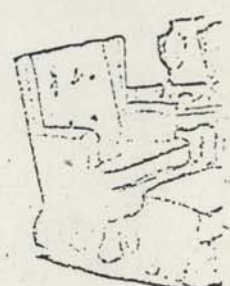
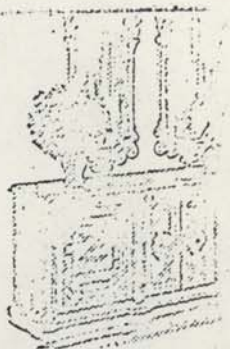
With the huge population expansion in Eastern Prince William County and Northern Virginia in general, the park easily could repay much of its purchase and development cost through fees, he said. The park could have a golf course, miniature railroad, and miniature paddleboats.

Long-Term Proposition

But Vaden and other officials realize it would take several years to buy and develop the park. The county would have to vote on park bonds, and federal aid would be needed.

The Freestone Point area is in the Dumfries Magisterial District, and the supervisor from that district, Dr. A. J. Ferlazzo, is a strong supporter of the county's park and recreation program.

Ferlazzo said he was basically in favor of the plan for the area, including the proposed park designation on the master plan, but was skeptical about its development cost. He said he thought it was an ideal



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