

PW Officials Fire Salvo In Battlefield Clash

By EUGENE COX JR.

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The Manassas National Battlefield Park is not in any danger of being surrounded by development, a county official said Monday.

Roger Snyder, planning director for Prince William County, said the allegations National Park Service officials and concerned citizens made during a meeting in Washington, D.C. Wednesday were false.

"It is not true that the battlefield park is being threatened or being surrounded by development," Snyder said. "It's simply is not true."

Park officials of the park service's national capital region and a group of citizens attended a Civil War Roundtable last week and bashed the Prince William County Board of Supervisors for wanting to develop roads and land around the park site.

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

REFERENCE

Members of the roundtable agreed with Rolland Swain, superintendent of the battlefield park, that the board's favoring of the Virginia Department of Transportation's proposal for widening U.S. 29-211 and Va. 234 and the rezoning of the 543-acre Williams Center would take away from the historical aesthetics of the park.

"They're in some danger of losing credibility with the county and some preservationists," Snyder said. "A vast majority (of the land) is for low density and residential (purposes) and that's exactly what Rolland Swain would like to see in the first place."

Snyder said periphery of the battlefield park is about 18.5 miles, or 98,000 linear feet. Just under 2.5 miles, 12.8 percent, of the boundary is adjacent to business park developments.

Those three business parks are:

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the Battlefield Business Park (which shares 2,000 feet of common boundary with park), Park Ridge (which shares 4,500 feet) and the Williams Center (which shares 6,000 feet). Snyder said all three business parks have frontage on Interstate 66.

"That's all the land that is planned for high intensity (business development) use," Snyder said. "The Williams Center is mixed used (business and residential)."

Gainesville Supervisor Tony Guiffre said in an interview on Friday the widening of the highways would not be hazardous to the park site.

"We have the money (for the highway improvements), we have the approval of the Virginia Department of Transportation and I thought we had the concurrency of the Department of Interior."

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Salvo Fired

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Guiffre said the county and state have budgeted and approved \$180,000 for the road improvements.

The improvements to the roads include putting dedicated left-hand turn lanes at each of the four-way intersections.

"We're not making it a four-lane highway," Guiffre said. "I would not support a four-lane highway through the park."

He added that a four-lane highway was not needed all the way through because after traffic passes the intersection it moves freely.

Guiffre said the park is a commercial establishment and that commercial entrances are needed at its front gate.

"It needs to have deceleration and acceleration lanes," he said.

Dumfries Supervisor Edwin King said he would not support any project that would detract from "that land that the U.S. government owns."

"But we have a need to the citizens of Prince William County and one of the things vital to life is (for residents) to move about the county freely," King said. "If roads are not improved, this can't be accomplished."

A county report indicated that 30 accidents, three with injuries, occurred at the U.S. 29-211 and Va. 234 intersection this year, according to Guiffre.

"Ask any citizen that travels it and any police officers that cruises the area (to see how bad it is)," he said. "That intersection has always been bad. At one time, it was the worse intersection in the county."

He added that the widening of the highways is to travel safer for people not to make the park site ugly.

The rezoning for the Williams Center, which was purchased by the

Hazel/Peterson development firm, was supported by Swain, according to Snyder.

"Swain is on the hot seat with some preservationists because he supported that rezoning," Snyder said. "They have asked that he be ousted, but (that's) because they don't understand the rezoning."

"I admire Swain for being a champion of his park," Snyder said. "He has pride and integrity for looking out for his park."

Although he supported the rezoning of the Hazel/Peterson property, Swain said, he did not support a proffer which stated that if the park made land available to the firm, it would upgrade the U.S. 29-211 and Va. 234 intersection.

"I said we would not make land available to upgrade intersection for increasing capacity."

Swain added that the park does plan to cut down about 300 acres of pine trees located in different locations throughout the park. He said cutting down of the trees is important to preserving the cultural landscape of the park as it appeared in 1861 and 1862.

"It's important because of (battles') infantry tactics," he said. "It's an element in understanding the battle."