

Occoquan secures museum in juicy land deal

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■ OCCOQUAN

What a deal.

The Fairfax County Water Authority is deeding over to the town of Occoquan about an acre of land including the Mill House Museum at the end of Mill Street.

"I just can't believe it," said Occoquan Mayor Pat Conway.

"This has really come as a surprise to us."

Most certainly a pleasant one.

The Occoquan Town Council agreed to accept the property during its March meeting last week.

Turning the property over to the town made sense to the water authority, said Jim Warfield, executive officer of the Fairfax County Water Authority.

The authority already had been leasing the Mill House to Historic Occoquan Inc. for a dollar a year and had done so since the 1960s. Additionally, the authority did not have any plans for the property while the town did. The idea of deeding the

land to Occoquan arose after the town requested an easement from the authority so that it could make some improvements on the authority's land.

The town wanted to move ahead with its \$200,000 Mill Street Improvement Project. The improvements includes installing new streetlights, a brick sidewalk, making curb improvements, adding 16 new parking spaces and building a turn-around area.

Some of this work, including the turn-around, would be done on the portion of the authority's property at the end of Mill Street.

The town also wants to build a river overlook near the Mill House and to erect historical markers on the property. Again, easements from the water authority would be needed to do the work.

The property being offered to the town includes the museum building and the land around it back to the Water Authority's fenced complex. The complex includes an old raw water pumping station that will be abandoned

after construction of a new pumping station on the Fairfax side of the Occoquan is completed in 2003.

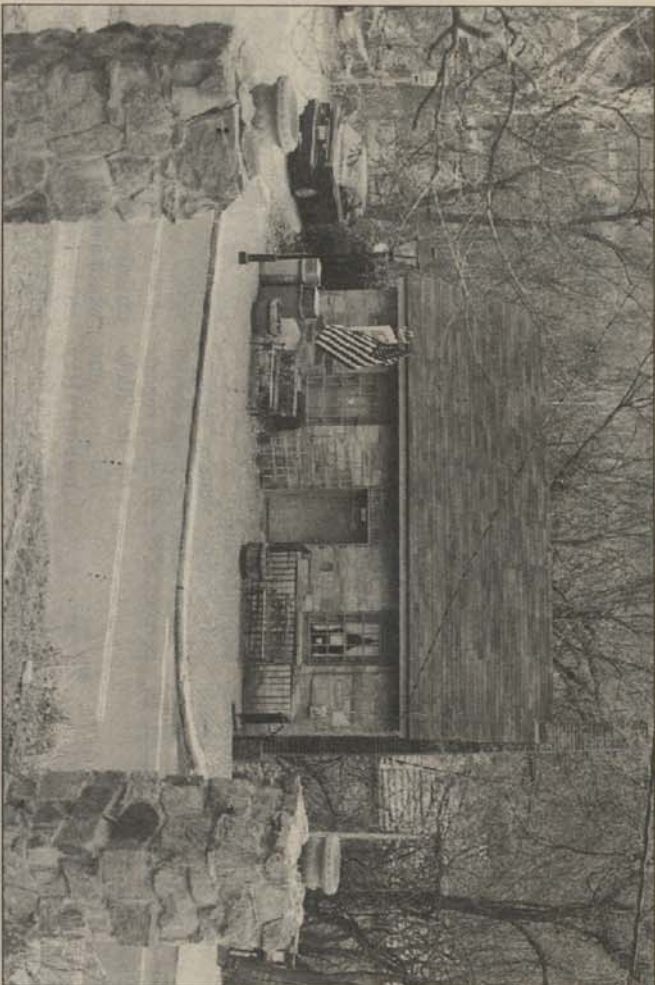
Warfield said that in the past the Authority had held on to its property adjacent to the town of Occoquan because it didn't know if it would be needed. However, with the new pump station location determined, it became obvious that the authority would not be needing the land.

As part of the arrangement, the town of Occoquan needs to have the property surveyed and the legal paperwork drawn up. As soon as that is completed, the property will belong to the town.

Aside from the improvements already planned for the area, Conway would like to see more done. The Mill house, which was built in the late 1700, was part of a large merchant grist mill.

"There's no reason why we can't plan on reconstructing a mill there in the future," Conway said.

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The Fairfax County Water Authority has deeded the Mill House Museum and the property surrounding it to the town of Occoquan.

AMY ROSSETTI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER