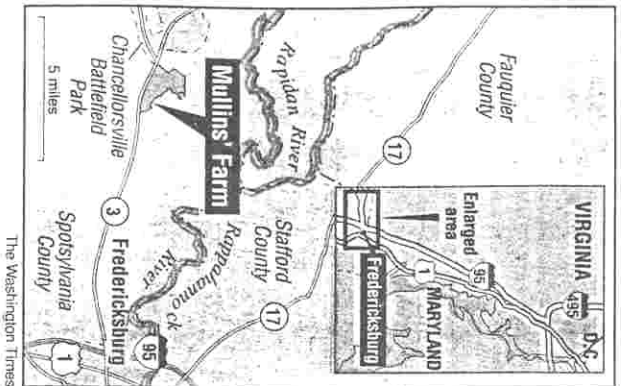


FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2002



Civil War battlefield in jeopardy

Zoning vote moves Chancellorsville development closer

By Tim Lenke
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Spotsylvania County planners voted early yesterday morning to recommend approval of a large housing and retail development on part of the Chancellorsville Civil War battlefield.

At a crowded and boisterous meeting that began Wednesday evening and lasted more than five hours, the county planning commission voted 5-2 in favor of rezoning that would allow a Reston developer to build 1,995 houses and as much as 2.2 million square feet of office and retail buildings on a site

known as the Mullins' Farm. The development would be known as the Town of Chancellorsville.

Current zoning allows for about 255 homes, shops and offices on 55 acres. The developer, Dogwood Development, and supporters of the project say it could inject as much as \$10 million into the county over the next 12 years.

The planners' decision was a significant but expected blow to opponents of the development, which include the Coalition to Save Chancellorsville Battlefield, a union of 11 groups. Representatives of the coalition said they anticipated the planners would recommend the re-

LAND

From page A1

18,000 Union and 12,000 Confederate soldiers died in the battle, which was won by the Confederacy even though they were outnumbered nearly 2-to-1. The two regiments first clashed at the spot now being considered for development.

"It's really a unique treasure," Mr. Campi said. "There's a great story to be told about the fighting on the Mullins' farm, and if it is developed on, that story will be lost forever."

The protection of historic landmarks is not the only thing at stake, development opponents said.

"It's not just about the Civil War," said Hap Connors, deputy director of communications for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a Spotsylvania resident. "What people are telling us is that they are tired of the traffic, sick of the sprawl, care about water shortages and schools, are worried about higher taxes, and that

they're fed up."

Growth in Spotsylvania County is capped at 2 percent. Those in favor of the project said the Chancellorsville site could be developed and still fall within that range, but opponents aren't convinced.

"It's difficult to do that when you start handing out authorizations of 800 percent more than zoning," said Bob Hagen, a development opponent who was elected to the county's Board of Supervisors on Tuesday. "You can't allocate all your development in one area."

Mr. Hagen's election was viewed by many as a referendum on the development. A Republican representing the Courtdands District, he won 64 percent of the vote, beating independent Robert Scott. He will serve for one year, filling the spot vacated when his predecessor, Mark Cole, resigned after being elected to the Virginia House of Delegates.

Coalition members will meet in coming days to develop a report they say will show Dogwood Development has overstated the economic benefits of the development,

zoning, but spoke out to send a message to county supervisors, who are expected to vote on it in December.

"We expected to lose. We're not surprised," said Jim Campi, director of Policy and Communications for the Civil War Preservation Trust, and a chief spokesman for the coalition. "We almost always lose fights like these at the planning-commission level."

The Chancellorsville Battlefield is best known as the site where Stonewall Jackson, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's second in command, was mortally wounded. About see LAND, page A12

while understating the amount of money, or profits, it will be required to reimburse the county for the cost of the development. The developer says the profits, based on land values five years after the project is approved, total \$31.6 million.

The coalition also said the report will prove that tourists visiting historical sites such as Chancellorsville spend more money than average tourists.

John Mullins, owner of the property and a well-known funeral director in Spotsylvania, said he would develop the land according to current zoning if supervisors reject the plan.

The Chancellorsville battlefield is just the latest site that has faced a struggle over its survival. The Civil War Preservation Trust has placed more than a dozen battlefields on its preservation list. In 1999, Civil War preservationists successfully fought plans from Disney to build a theme park near the Manassas National Battlefield Park.