

SPECIAL SESSION:

State of West Virginia, County of Jefferson, to-wit:

At a Special Session of the County Commission of said County and State continued and held at the Old Charles Town Library Ground Floor meeting room thereof on Thursday, January 31, 2013, beginning at 7:00 o'clock p.m.

PRESENT: Dale Manuel, President,
Lyn Widmyer, Patsy Noland and Walt Pellish; Commissioners. Ms. Tabb was absent with notice. Debbie Keyser, County Administrator and Cynthia Schott, Administrative Assistant.

In re: PUBLIC HEARING - AMEND THE COUNTY ZONING MAP TO CONSIDER REZONING OF PROPERTY DESIGNATED AS TAX DISTRICT: HARPERS FERRY, MAP: 7, PARCEL: 18. THIS PROPERTY IS LOCATED ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF US ROUTE 340 ON CAMPGROUND ROAD APPROXIMATELY A HALF MILE EAST OF ITS INTERSECTION WITH OLD TAYLOR LANE AND IS A TOTAL OF 3.94 ACRES. THIS PROPERTY IS CURRENTLY ZONED RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AND A REQUEST HAS BEEN MADE BY THE OWNERS, THE AITCHESON FAMILY TRUST AND FEDERICA ADKINSON, TO CHANGE THE ZONING TO RESIDENTIAL/LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL.

Commissioner Manuel opened the Public Hearing at 7:01 p.m.

Annette van Hilst, R. A., The Crossroads Group, on behalf of the applicant, presented a Power Point presentation to the Commissioners.

A sign in sheet was provided for each person wanting to speak.

Comments were made by the following:

- Al Alsdorf, Harpers Ferry resident – Mr. Alsdorf distributed a map of the Battle of Harpers Ferry (September 12-15, 1862) informing the Commission that the map doesn't show on any planning maps. Mr. Alsdorf spoke of the importance of preserving Civil War battlegrounds; this battleground is a National treasure. We have an opportunity to develop this area the same as Antietam Battlefield. Battlegrounds can increase tourism and contribute to the economy. Mr. Alsdorf is not in favor of granting the rezoning
- Rebecca L. Harriett, Superintendent, representing Harpers Ferry National Historic Park. Ms. Harriett read the letter she submitted opposing the rezoning. The National Park Service believes the rezoning is inconsistent with goals and objectives set forth in the County's 2004 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan speaks clearly of the importance of "promoting the conservation of the natural, cultural, and historical resources and the preservation of the scenic beauty." The Comprehensive Plan also acknowledges that history tourism is a significant element of Jefferson County's economy. The predominant character of the property's surrounding is residential, rural and historic along with its proximity to Park lands which are undeveloped and rural in appearance. The National Park Service has acquired a scenic easement on the majority of tract of Cavalier Heights neighborhood which prohibits use of the land for commercial purposes, excessive height of structures and antennas, the cutting of mature trees without the consent of the NPS and restricts the size of advertisements such as billboard and signs. The scenic easement is a reflection of the area's visual significance. The prospect of similar incompatible development on the Aticheson property is a serious concern.

- Mr. Robert Aitcheson, part owner of Aitcheson property. Mr. Aitcheson stated that the property is owned by three (3) entities. Mr. & Mrs. Aitcheson own ¼, Mr. & Mrs. Roger Perry own ½ and Federica Adkinson owns ¼. Mr. Aitcheson stated that the Park Service has never contacted any of the owners regarding obtaining a scenic easement or purchasing a scenic easement. Mr. Aitcheson stated the area already has various mixed uses all around them. Mr. Aitcheson stated though there are no plans at this point for the property, he believes a use which would benefit the entire community would be in the best interest of the community as opposed to putting a trailer park on the property as it is zoned for it.

The following materials were received:

- A letter from the Rebecca L. Harriett, Superintendent National Park Service, Hapers Ferry National Historical Park.
- Map of The Battle of Harpers Ferry.
- Letter from Nicholas J. Lund, Civil War Associate, on behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association.

Mr. Manuel stated the record will be held open for two weeks to allow time for written comments to be submitted.

There being no further business, Mr. Manuel adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

DALE MANUEL, COMMISSION PRESIDENT