

Spotsylvania County

March 9, 2004

STAFF REPORT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY REVIEW 04-A

Berkeley District

APPLICANT: Spotsylvania County Government

PROPOSED LAND USE: Fire Company #1 and Emergency Services Squad #1

TAX MAP ID: 48 (A) 4

ACREAGE: Land records indicate a total of 11.22 acres.

PLANNING DISTRICT: Courthouse Development District

DISTRICT LOCATION: The Courthouse Development District is generally bounded by the Spotsylvania Battlefield to the north; Block House Road (Route 648) to the west; Snow Hill subdivision to the south; and Saguns Landing subdivision to the east.

The Courthouse Area is divided into three planning districts, where more detailed objectives apply. The district boundaries are based upon the community's vision for the areas as well as the "entry points" to the Courthouse.

HISTORIC VILLAGE PLANNING AREA: Consists of the core of the Courthouse Area. It is currently characterized by a mixture of uses, including residential, commercial, office and institutional. The development pattern is compact and focuses on the crossroads formed by the intersection of Routes 208 and 613. The existing Spotsylvania Courthouse Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, includes many of the historic buildings found in the Courthouse Area.

PRESENT ZONING: Agricultural 2 (A2) with a portion in a Historic Overlay

ADJACENT ZONING: Commercial 2 (C2) to the east; Agricultural 2 (A2) to the south; and Rural (RU) to the north

ADJACENT LAND USES: Mullins and Thompson Funeral Home to the east;

Courthouse Commons subdivision to the south (3 units under construction); the Confederate Cemetery to the west; and the Alrich Farm with associated structures to the north.

**TOPOGRAPHY/VEGETATION
EXISTING LAND FEATURES
DRAINAGE/STORMWATER
MANAGEMENT:**

This parcel is generally flat and cleared, with grasses dominating the landscape. There is an existing pond in the western corner. Although standing water is found in several places, grading and a stormwater management pond could be used to improve on-site drainage as well as fulfill stormwater management requirements.

SITE ACCESS:

Emergency vehicle access could be kept separate from personal vehicle traffic on this site via separate entrances off Courthouse Commons Boulevard. In order to reduce response time, emergency vehicles could exit the site directly onto Courthouse Road (Route 208).

TRAFFIC:

Traffic along Route 208 becomes congested at the approach towards the intersection of Routes 208 and 613. The distance between the intersection and the site is enough that entering/exiting the site would rarely be affected by traffic backups, and once the Courthouse Bypass is constructed, this situation will improve.

WATER/SEWER:

Both water and sewer are available to the site.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This location is suitable for the relocation of Fire/Emergency Medical Services Station #1. While traffic is a concern, this site is closer to the majority of its call destinations than the current Station #1. The Courthouse Bypass will increase the effectiveness of this location and shorten emergency response times. In addition, there are few environmental concerns, the use is allowed by right under current zoning, and utilities (water/sewer) are available.

Due to the fact that a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for development on this site, the Historic Preservation Commission will be the mechanism used to address historic preservation and design concerns. In addition, the design of the facility will be expected to follow the policies as stated in the *Spotsylvania Courthouse Area Historic Architectural Guidelines*.

Additionally, the Courthouse Area Plan Land Use Map will have to be amended to designate this parcel as "public use."

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENT ANALYSIS

Public Facilities

Goal: Provide community facilities/services to serve existing and new development in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Goal: Provide emergency services and law enforcement to protect citizens and allow them to enjoy a safe and secure environment.

Public Facility Analysis

One of the most important functions of local government is to provide public services to its citizens. Services, such as fire/rescue, law enforcement, libraries, parks and recreation, schools, solid waste management, and water/wastewater treatment, help to fulfill the important duty of government to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the public. In assuming this responsibility for an entire jurisdiction, government is able to achieve economies of scale for cost effective service delivery. Nevertheless, the provision of public services requires a considerable investment of capital to provide the infrastructure necessary for an adequate level of service. Thus, funding for delivery of public services is a major challenge for local government.

Where possible, current and future needs should be addressed through existing facilities. Where this is not possible, new facilities can be constructed. By identifying where public schools, water or sewer lines, fire and rescue stations, and other improvements should be constructed, the County can encourage development in appropriate areas and discourage development in inappropriate areas. Appropriate here is meant to be consistent with adopted policies. Coordination of County land use, transportation and public facilities development is the key to providing equitable, efficient, and cost effective government services for current and future County residents.

Created in concert with other County departments, the Public Facilities Plan recommends the general timing and location of future County facilities based on desired service levels. It is designed to function as a needs assessment supporting the establishment of specific project priorities through the annual Capital Improvement Program. A comprehensive approach integrates facility needs, siting criteria, and design issues with adopted land use plans and other planning concerns. The Plan will guide the acquisition of public facility sites through the rezoning process and advance purchase or optioning. **The Public Facilities Plan does not address funding availability, debt capacity, or other financial concerns, nor does it address facility components, equipment, design, and numerous other factors best left to the expertise of the operating departments. In addition, the location recommendations are general and should not be interpreted as site specific.**

This Public Facilities Plan is one element of the Spotsylvania County Comprehensive Plan. As with all components of the Comprehensive Plan, it is intended to function as guide for decision-makers; flexibility is required when fundamental conditions change or analysis based on new data reaches differing conclusions. The comprehensive plan and each of its components should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated periodically based on new data and analysis.

In preparing the Public Facilities Plan, each facility (ie: schools, parks and recreation, fire/rescue, etc.) was address in terms of existing conditions, evaluation criteria, future expectations and future plans. In this way the Plan will provide a baseline for future planning, evaluation of exiting development policies, and creation of new policies where appropriate.

General Evaluation Criteria

An evaluation of existing public facilities and a determination of needs for future facilities involves several related criteria. These criteria cannot be static or absolute because particular needs and existing conditions vary greatly throughout the County.

Location

Location must be considered in relation to various elements of the Comprehensive Plan, such as existing and future population distribution, zoning, major transportation arteries, topography, and utilities. A centralized location is required for facilities that provide services to intermittent visitors where a time and distance factor is not critical. Decentralized locations are desirable for facilities that serve day-to-day needs of citizens and where a time and distance factor becomes less important.

Accessibility

The site should be accessible to major transportation routes providing the best possible access to the greatest number of citizens expected to use the facility.

Proximity to Related and Supporting Facilities

There are advantages to the grouping of related central-type facilities within one complex or area. Convenience to the public is thereby enhanced, operational economics are achieved, and less land is required to provide shared facilities such as parking. Some facilities are also more effective when located adjacent to a business district or shopping center, thereby assuring the greatest convenience to the largest number of people. Public facilities should not be located in the very heart of the retail core, but preferably near the periphery of the commercial center.

Condition and Obsolescence Assessment

The present state of repair for a particular facility needs to be determined. Existing building space arrangements and special mechanical equipment requirements to meet the function needs of the facility must be considered. The operational efficiency of the facility and its possible adaptation to change or enlargement are factors that must be reviewed to determine the relative obsolescence of the building plan. Poor condition and high levels of obsolescence may indicate a need for replacement.

Capacity in Relation to Present and Future Utilization

The current level of performance of any particular service or function must be related to optimum present and future utilization. Increased demands for services will typically require increased staff and equipment resources with a corresponding need for additional space.

Site Adequacy

The site for each building should be adequate to provide for: (a) the space needs of the building and any probable future additions, (b) parking space for vehicles of both visitors and employees, and (c) sufficient landscaped open space for a satisfactory and pleasing appearance.

Architectural Quality

A measure of usefulness is also contained in the building's ability, by its appearance and arrangement, to inspire higher civic achievement in those who see it or in those who work within its confines. An unattractive building is either a mistake or a monument to indifference, while an architecturally attractive building is a reflection of cultural attainment and a credit to the County citizens.

Supportive of Adopted Planning Policies

The proposed project should support a majority of adopted County policies and plans. Without reference to an overall framework for development of the County, projects can be inconsistent and counterproductive. If a project appears justified, even though it is not entirely consistent with adopted policies, then a change in policy should be proposed and reviewed through the planning process.

Cost Efficiency

New projects should be shown to be cost effective in technical design and/or justified by the public benefits outweighing the public costs. This allows the maximum use of existing capacity or services, with potential expansion when justified by the costs as well as need.

Key Objectives of the Public Facilities Plan

The Public Facilities Plan should serve as the foundation for future decisions concerning the location and expansion of public facilities. In making these decisions, the following objectives should be considered:

- Locate new facilities to provide convenient service to the greatest number of residents.
- Construct or expand facilities in accord with established level of service standards.
- Help guide future growth by coordinating the location of public facilities with recommendations in the County's Comprehensive Plan.
- Use the plan as a general guide for the County's Capital Improvements Program.
- Ensure equitable distribution of public facilities between established and newly developing areas of Spotsylvania County. Consider existing facility maintenance or replacement needs in already developed areas of the county.
- Mitigate the impact of public facilities on adjacent planned and existing land uses.
- Acquire sites for future public facilities as soon as possible, ideally obtaining property for facilities many years before there is a need to build.
- Use the recommendations of the plan, where feasible, to develop multiple use locations (i.e., joint park/school sites).
- Use the recommendations of this plan to determine whether proposed public facilities are substantially in accord with the Comprehensive Plan, as required by state law.

Fire and Rescue Location Criteria

The following criteria should be used in determining appropriate sites for additional stations in

order to provide a consistent level of service across the County.

- Locate stations at points with quick access to a major arterial. If possible, sites should be located near two major arterials that offer both east west and north south travel.
- Locate new fire/rescue stations near village and mixed-use centers where possible based on key site planning considerations such as access, safety and response time.
- Reduce response areas to a 3-mile radius for facilities within the Primary Development Boundary in order to reduce response times.
- Response areas outside the Primary Development Boundary should have a 5-mile radius.

Design Criteria

The following design criteria should be considered when developing a new site for emergency response stations.

- Co-locate fire and rescue facilities for maximum efficiency. Consider co-locating with other public facilities as well.
- Acquire sites of at least five acres in size in order to provide for co-location of public facilities and future expansion.
- Consider including a community meeting room for 50-100 persons in the design of new fire/rescue facilities unless there is a similar public facility available for the surrounding community.

Findings

Many variables affect response time and the generation of fire/rescue calls by a given population. Among them are geography, road networks, age and density of population, and age and quality of the building stock. The analysis of the department focuses on future population projections and call loading within the fire/rescue district or response zones. A threshold of 1000 calls per year is used as the benchmark indicator of full capacity at any single fire/rescue station. Certain findings may be reported as follows:

- The total number of service calls is expected to increase 22% by the year 2003 and by 75% by the year 2020. This is based on the current level of population growth.
- Four fire/rescue stations currently experience over 1000 calls per year and thus may be considered above capacity. This is based on the most recent figures available.
- Currently the fire/rescue stations with the highest number of calls are Courthouse, Four-Mile Fork, Salem Church, and Five-Mile Fork.

Recommendations

- Develop separate response time standards for urban and rural portions of the County. The response time in the urban or suburban areas should be between 4 and 6 minutes. The response time in the rural areas should be between 8 and 10 minutes.
- Reduce land costs for new facilities through advance acquisition.

- Develop minimum levels of service, particularly response time standards.
- Establish new service areas based on response time standards resulting in smaller service areas for the fire/rescue stations located within the Primary Development Boundary.
- Until such time as response time data can be developed a 3-mile service radius should be considered as the planning standard within the Primary Development Boundary.

Cultural and Historic Resource Guiding Principals

1. The Courthouse Historic District shall ensure preservation of its unique, historic village crossroads
 - a. Expand the current Courthouse District where appropriate.
 - b. Develop a campus master plan for government facilities and purchase property around the Courthouse whenever available and appropriate to implement the master plan.
 - c. Encourage the National Park Service to construct a Visitor's Center at the Spotsylvania Courthouse Battlefield and connect the battlefield to the Courthouse Village through pedestrian trails.
2. Scenic approaches and buffers preserve viewsheds around Civil War battlefields and other historic sites shall be preserved.
 - a. Identify/define approaches and viewsheds to/from Civil War battlefields.
 - b. Use methods such as purchase of development rights, easements, and buffers to preserve those resources
 - c. Support activities of non-profit preservation organizations
3. Our community's identity is distinguished by its historical and cultural resources.
 - a. Our Historic and cultural resources shall be preserved.

Spotsylvania Courthouse Area Plan

At Community Forums held during the development of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, citizens expressed their desire to preserve the scenic and historic resources at the Courthouse. The citizens also saw the Courthouse Area as an important residential and commercial growth area for the County. As a result, the Comprehensive Plan recommended that the Courthouse Area be developed as a village.

A series of ten (10) community meetings were held between October 1995 and July 1997 to provide a forum for residents, landowners, and the business community to share ideas and provide information to County staff as to the future of the Courthouse Area. The vision statement weaves together various themes that reflect the community's shared thoughts about its desired future. It also guided the plan's approach and content, and forms the basis for specific details and recommendations for implementation.

Vision: "Spotsylvania Courthouse is an attractive, harmonious community that embodies the best of rural and small town life where one feels continuity with the past."

Participants attending the community meetings were asked to identify the “entry points” into the Courthouse area. Results of this task are as follows and were used as the basis for identifying the “boundary” of the Courthouse area.

- From the east, the location where Route 208 drops to two(2) lanes;
- From the west, the junction of Route 613 and Route 608;
- From the south, Massaponax Church Road.

Highlights of the Courthouse Area Plan include the following:

- A land use plan that divides the Courthouse area into three (3) planning areas;
 - Historic Village Planning Area
 - Village Transition Planning Area
 - Rural Planning Area
- Goals and objectives that articulate citizen feelings about how they want their community to develop;
- An implementation strategy that identifies how and when the plan objectives will be accomplished; and
- A *Design Guidelines* manual intended to maintain the visual character of the Courthouse Area to ensure architectural compatibility between existing and future development.

Courthouse Development District Policies

Cultural and Historic Resources

- a. Expand the Courthouse Historic District where appropriate;
- b. Identify and document historic, archeological, and battlefield features prior to alteration of terrain or landscape within the Planning Area;
- c. Preserve historic sites, structures, and landscapes;
- d. Promote the preservation of cultural and historic sites, structures and landscapes;
- e. Increase the level of community awareness of and involvement in historic preservation;
- f. Educate the community on the significance of the Spotsylvania Courthouse Battlefield and Related Lands;
- g. Promote creative design techniques for development proposals adjacent to the battlefield or on related lands.
- h. Continue the partnership with the National Park Service to develop guidelines that protect Civil War battlefields and significant viewsheds while recognizing the commodity value of surrounding privately held land.

Environmental Resources

- a. Require public open space as new development occurs;
- b. Encourage compact development that preserves trees, open spaces and scenic views;
- c. Protect scenic viewsheds and historic settings from unsightly intrusions;

Land Use Policies

- a. Develop the historic Village Planning Area as the Village Center of the Courthouse Special Planning District and promote it as the County Seat of Spotsylvania;
- b. Allow compatible infill development in appropriate locations;

Community Design

- a. Locate public and civic buildings around public squares and open spaces or at the termination of street vistas to serve as landmarks in the community;
- b. Promote development that preserves the viewshed.

Historic resources and their protection are important themes throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Spotsylvania County has been afforded not only a rich inventory of resources but also extensive documentation. Few places in the County have such an inventory of resources as does the Courthouse Area.

Identified Historic Resources

Name of Property: Confederate Cemetery

Location: Adjacent to site under review

Property Date: 1866

Site Description/Notable Landscape Features: This cemetery is located on the south side of Courthouse Road near the Courthouse area. A long tree-lined drive leads to the cemetery, which was sited on a gently sloping hill. Fences and trees mark the edges of the property.

Statement of Significance: Dedicated to Confederate soldiers, this cemetery pays tribute to those served the South in the Civil War. It continues to be used today by descendants of Confederate soldiers as well as others interested in history. Hundreds of Confederate troops had been put to rest in crudely marked and unmarked graves scattered over the four(4) battlefields. Local women concerned about these unattended plots formed the Spotsylvania Memorial Association. Led by Ann Boulware of La Vista plantation, they established this Confederate in August of 1866 on five (5) enclosed acres of land. The Association identified and reburied nearly six hundred (600) soldiers in the new location, organizing the interments by state with only a few unknown markers.

Name of Property: Crampton Farm (Dabney Farm, Alrich Farm)

Location: Across Route 208 from the site under review

Property Date: 1845-1855

Site Description/Notable Landscape Features: Mature trees dot the lawn, and bushes grow at the front of the house. A number of outbuildings stand behind the house, and fields stretch to the east.

Architectural Style: Greek Revival

Description: This two-story, two-bay house is constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond and covered by a standing seam metal side gable roof with a wide cornice. The first story is articulated with a single-leaf door with wide side-lights and a transom in the western bay and a double-hung window in the eastern bay. Both bays on the second story are marked with double-hung windows. A one-story, one-bay porch with hipped roof supported by Tuscan columns shelters the entrance in the eastern bay. An interior chimney is located at the side of the house. Two two-story frame additions have been constructed at the west end and the rear of the house.

There are twelve (12) secondary resources associated with this building, four (4) of which are historic. A Mid-nineteenth century brick smokehouse, constructed entirely of 5-course American brick and covered with a front gable, wood shingle roof, stands directly behind the house. A historic machine shed, supported by unfinished poles, is clad in vertical boards and covered with a gable roof with shed roof extensions. Two (2) historic barns, one with a concrete foundation, vertical board siding, and a metal, gambrel roof and one with a concrete block foundation, vertical board siding and a gable roof. Connected to this complex is a concrete block shed with a gable roof.

Statement of Significance: Located only a half mile north of the Spotsylvania Courthouse, Dabney Farm, also known as Crampton Farm, was residence of R.C. Dabney, a Clerk of the Courthouse from 1850 to 1875. The brick dwelling is the only residence to remain intact after the intense Civil War battles in the Courthouse district. The Alrich family has owned the farm for three (3) generations, with a portion located in the Spotsylvania Courthouse Historic District. The house and its surviving outbuildings make this a noteworthy farm complex. This house also provides an excellent example of Creek Revival style architecture, as constructed in rural Spotsylvania. The form of the house and its detailing, including the wide cornice, the simple panel door surrounded by sidelights and a multi-light transom, and the classically-inspired porch are hallmarks of this style.

Related Lands Database

Name: Cooke/Weisinger Advance

Priority: 2-A

Significance: This tract of land was traversed by a Confederate advance, moving northeast, on May 12, 1864. While the costly stalemate continued in the area of the "Bloody Angle," Confederate troops under Generals John R. Cooke and David A. Weisiger tried to relieve pressure on their lines by flanking the Union army's left. The Confederates advanced on either side of the Fredericksburg Road (Route 208) at dusk on May 12, 1864. Unable to disrupt the Federal line, the Confederates struggled well into the night to survive the fury of the "Bloody Angle."

Objectives: 1) To maintain an opportunity to commemorate and interpret the Confederate advance. 2) To maintain the setting along Burnside Drive by a) limiting physical (but not visual) access to or disturbance of earthworks located immediately inside NPS boundary and (b) limiting intrusive activities, noises, odors, or visually obtrusive elements that would diminish the visitors experience. 3) To preserve the wartime road still used as a thoroughfare, the postwar Confederate Cemetery, and the exterior of the Dabney House. 4) To identify and document additional, presumed wartime features prior to alteration of terrain or landscape.

Existing preservation mechanisms, such as Historic Overlay Districts, Design Guidelines and Site Plan Review are in place to preserve, protect and promote these valuable resources.

Policy Issues and Identified Alternatives

On June 12, 2001, the Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance NO.14 requesting the Circuit Court to order a special election on the issuance of General Obligation Public Improvement Bonds in the maximum principal amount of \$30,000,000 for the enhancement and expansion of Fire and EMS facilities and equipment. Between September and October of 2001, the Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services Department held community meetings in all seven (7) Election Districts within Spotsylvania County. On November 6, 2001, voters approved the Bond Referendum by over a 70% percent majority.

The replacement and consolidation of Fire Company #1 and EMS Station #1 was an identified project to be financed via the Bond Referendum. Site selection was then undertaken within the Courthouse Area to locate a suitable site for the new Fire/EMS station.

Evaluation and Site Selection Criteria

As stated previously, the Public Facilities Element of the Comprehensive identifies the

evaluation and site selection criteria to be used when identifying locations for new public facilities. This site was evaluated by planning staff and is found to be consistent with the policies identified in the Public Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Courthouse Area Land Use Plan vs Existing Zoning

The Comprehensive Plan, along with the Courthouse Area Plan, is one of the many tools decision makers use when evaluating a development proposal. Typically, a Land Use Map is used to evaluate rezoning requests. This map, often referred to as the “Future Land Use Map,” displays the preferred vision for the future development of a parcel of land or area. In the case of this proposal, the zoning designation is in conflict with the Land Use Plan Map. This parcel is currently zoned A-2 which permits the following uses by-right:

- Agriculture;
- Dwelling, manufactured home on permanent foundations;
- Dwelling, single-family, detached;
- Quasi-public parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and related facilities;
- Public uses;

The Zoning Ordinance defines public use as “ any area, building or structure held, used or controlled exclusively for public purposes by any department or branch of the Federal Government, Commonwealth of Virginia, or the Spotsylvania County Government under direct authority of the Board of Supervisors, without reference to the ownership of the building or structures or the realty upon which it is situated.”

With a Special Use Permit, this property could be developed, subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors, as the following:

- Antique shops;
- Camp, recreation trailer camp, summer camp;
- Civic and sports arena;
- Funeral home adjacent to a perpetual care cemetery;
- Golf course, country club and clubhouse;
- Hospital or nursing home;
- Indoor athletic facilities;
- Kennels;
- Public or Private School;
- Sawmill;
- Telecommunications tower;
- Vehicle, light or major service establishment;
- Wood by-products recycling center.

Therefore, the relocation of Fire Company #1 and Emergency Medical Services Squad #1 to this site is a by-right use under existing zoning. This site affords the County the opportunity to implement the goals, objectives and vision of Courthouse Area Plan through appropriate design and development techniques.

Staff Findings and Conclusions

The overriding rationale for the selection of this site for to provide the citizens of Spotsylvania County with more efficient response times for emergency services. At their current locations,

response times for Fire Company #1 and Rescue Squad #1 are impacted by the amount of traffic congestion currently experienced on Route 208. This site, in conjunction with the construction of the Courthouse Bypass, will provide better emergency service in a timely manner.

The proposed site supports a majority of adopted County policies and plans. Although the Courthouse Land Use Plan identifies this parcel as a local-serving public park, the map can be amended, at the direction of the Board of Supervisors, to be designated as public use.

Staff Recommendation

Given the findings and conclusions, staff is recommending **Alternative 3** for approval.

1. Find the location in non-compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and deny the request as a result of potential impacts on historic resources;
2. Find the location in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and begin the amendment process of the Courthouse Area Land Use Map;
3. Find the location in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan; begin the amendment process of the Courthouse Area Land Use Map; and authorize the Historic Preservation to initiate the Certificate of Appropriateness process for development of this site.