

The Pike Packet

News From The Snickersville Turnpike Association

March 2007

HIBBS BRIDGE RESTORATION ABOUT TO BEGIN

After over ten years of relentless pressure from the Snickersville Turnpike Association, Loudoun County, with VDOT's endorsement, will shortly begin the restoration of the historic dual-arched stone Hibbs Bridge, one of only a handful of still operating masonry bridges in Virginia. On December 12, 2006 the Invitation For Bid was issued, to which three bids were received. The low bid of approximately \$1.5M was made by the Sagres Construction Corporation of Alexandria, with the Espina Stone Company of Fairfax as the masonry subcontractor. Sagres has recently completed the restoration of a small stone bridge on Dry Mill Road and received good words from the County regarding their workmanship.

There will be a required Public Hearing on April 10th, after which and before 24 April, notice to proceed will be given. STA will be asking the County and VDOT to sponsor, along with us, a ground breaking ceremony on either Saturday, April 21st or Sunday, April 22nd, Earth Day. The work is to be completed within nine months and will involve a road closure and detour for a time duration to be announced. The inconvenience may be frustrating to some, but the results will be well worth the undertaking.

BIKE/HIKE THE-PIKE

The first annual Bike and Hike-the-Pike STA-sponsored event last October was an unqualified success. The purpose was two-fold – to involve our members more in our local activities and to have an event on the Turnpike that would allow residents all over Loudoun and beyond to visit our scenic Byway and enjoy a free fun day outdoors. AOL contributed to our overall costs, and Giant donated hot dogs and rolls. Safety was paramount in our planning, so we had members and other volunteers stationed at all intersections from Bluemont to Airmont for the hikers and on to Colchester Road for the bikers. Selecting a Sunday morning minimized the number of cars on the road.

After the hiking and biking, everyone reconvened at the Bluemont Community Center for food and music. The weather cooperated, and a good time was had by all. This year the event will be held on Sunday 14 October. We also plan to have a drawing for some of our historic preservation T-shirts and sweat shirts. Come one; come all!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCIES

The Board of Directors of the Snickersville Turnpike Association – and the western Loudoun community more generally – have been diminished and saddened by the loss of Board member Roger Wolff, who passed away on January 1. The retired USGS hydrologist had operated a tree farm on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge and attended the Goose Creek Friends Meeting.

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CELL TOWER ALERTS

Nextel is in the process of activating a new cell tower special exception and reactivating two others, all of them along or nearby the Turnpike. The new application is for a 106-foot tall pseudo-silo on Charlie Cockerill's farm near Colchester Road and the Turnpike. This 26 January 2007 filing involves a 92-foot tall "stealth" silo with a hemispheric top housing 12 external antennas at the 80-foot level. A 12 ft. by 20 ft. equipment building within a 50ft. by 50 ft. fence would be located nearby.

The previously dormant 106 ft. tall pseudo-silo on Watermill Road and the 108 ft. tall pseudo-silo on Edward Hale's property on Williams Gap Road are both in the process of being reactivated and will go through the referral process involving community meetings before going to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. One obvious question is since Sprint acquired Nextel, why is the Nextel network being expanded? They plan to lay off 5,000 employees after losing 300,000 wireless subscribers in a recent quarter.

Also the application for the extension of the 70 ft. tall grain elevator for an additional 40 ft. is moving forward. Invisible Towers, the company's new name, needs four cell phone companies to fill the 40 ft. in order to make the undertaking profitable.

The two T-Mobile applications between Aldie and Upperville, however, remain inactive. These are the 80 ft. tall pseudo-silo at Briar Patch and the 130 ft. monopole on Wildwood Lane. The Town of Middleburg has just released a request for bids to lease space for telecommunications antennas on their two municipal water towers. The responses, due by 8 March, will be considered by the Town Council.

Within the past year, the STA Board of Directors approved the STA Cell Tower Policy document. It will be used as the basis for our comments at Public Hearings and related correspondence.

RT. 50 TRAFFIC CALMING

After nearly twelve years and many delays, work is finally underway on the Upperville section of the Federally funded Route 50 Traffic Calming project. On February 16th, Senator John Warner spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Upperville. Congressman Frank Wolf was scheduled to speak also, but the House was having an important vote at the same time. His aide, J.T. Griffin, spoke on his behalf. Task Force members, including the co-chairs Jim Rich and Peter Schwartz, our new Commonwealth Transportation Board member, were there, as were Supervisor Jim Burton and VDOT Commissioner Dave Ekern.

The VDOT Construction Management Team of Billy Green and Michael Coffelt have moved into their office behind Shoemaker's Nursery in Upperville and they and the construction firm A & M Concrete Corporation began work on March 5th. The entire construction team is eager to work closely with the public on all aspects of the project and welcome visitors and callers at any time. Their local phone number is 592-7580. During the first phase of construction, drainage and pipe work starting at Trappe Road will result in one-way traffic on weekdays from 8AM to 4PM. Mr. Green will have weekly notices about the impacts of subsequent phases. The entire construction project is scheduled to be complete by September 2008.

At the Task Force meeting on February 9th, Michael Wallwork, the original consultant and roundabout expert on the Route 50 project, gave an excellent presentation about roundabouts in general and Gilberts Corner in particular. The Gilberts Corner section of the traffic calming project has gone to a design-build procurement process in order to complete construction more quickly. The design-build team will be on board by July with "substantial completion of the entire Gilberts Corner section by November 2009. The final design details will be subject to the newest updated traffic counts and the design expertise of Mr. Wallwork. (Continued on Page 3)

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The current schedule for the Aldie section has the advertisement date in January 2008, with construction to begin in April 2008 and construction completion in September 2009. The Middleburg section will require that additional funding be acquired so a realistic schedule is not available now.

(Board Vacancies continued from page 1)

Marvin Watts has long been affiliated with the Snickersville Turnpike Association as a Board member and as a frequent speaker at public hearings regarding local transportation issues. He is currently in New York City undergoing medical treatments but plans to return home this summer.

The Snickersville Turnpike Association has been a critical bulwark against the despoliation of western Loudoun – and particularly the area along Snickersville Turnpike for more than a decade. We now need your input and recommendations for our Board of Directors. Membership entails attending a monthly meeting and the active contribution of creativity and commitment to our community, its quality of life and its beauty. We are particularly interested in increasing our membership from the eastern (Aldie) end of the Turnpike, but we are seeking anybody with a commitment to the preservation of the Turnpike and the surrounding area.

If you have any suggestions for additions to our Board of Directors, please contact Board Chairman Henry Plaster at (540) 554-8591 or APLA739142@aol.com.

ROSEMORE

Last September a Public Notice noted that the County had accepted the application of James Kelley of Kelley Investments, LLC, to subdivide 168.71 acres on the northwest quadrant of Snickersville Turnpike and Yellow Schoolhouse Road into a cluster of 30 single-family lots of approximately one acre each. STA discovered, in following up, that a 6 September 2006 letter

from the County's Department of Building and Development had approved the applicant's

(Rosemore continued)

food plain alteration study. The letter included the following: "This decision is final and is unable to be appealed if the appeal is not initiated within 30 days."

STA invited property owners on nearby Yellow Schoolhouse Road and the Turnpike to a meeting at the Bluemont Community Center on the evening of 26 September. Apparently the County had previously suggested to the applicant, during the in limbo period of the Comprehensive Plan where one house per five acres was "by right", that he instead cluster into a one-acre hamlet the 30 houses with the rest being the required open space set-aside. During last summer's well testing on the Rosemore property, some attendees pointed out that their own water supply was seriously affected. STA wrote a 28 September letter to the County Board of Zoning Appeals registering our concern about the study's approval and expressing our further concerns about the many other issues involved. In response, the Zoning Administrator mailed us a 3 October letter containing an Application for Appeal form and asking for a \$350 application fee, both to be received by 5 October! We deferred.

On 19 October the County Health Department denied approval of the preliminary plat wells covering the existing and proposed wells and drain field sites. On 13 November, Michael Baggett, the County Planner (703-777-0397), provided the applicant his first review comments containing 41 paragraphs. Among the many issues were parking for four cars for each hamlet lot, soil not meeting requirements, the communal water distribution system and the underground water storage tank, and identifying the adjoining property owners. He stipulated a requirement for a 200-foot hamlet buffer setback and a second point of access to the rural road network, noting that the Turnpike is a Virginia Scenic Byway and is in the Beaverdam Creek Historic Roadways District.

A response from Kelley had not been received by the County to date. The impact of the subsequently approved Revised Comprehensive Plan is unknown as to how it will affect the applicant's plans. Please alert us to any new information so that we can collectively evaluate the impact and coordinate any response.