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Catoctin Meadows Rebuffs Town Council

Members of the Catoctin Meadows Home Owners Association recently learned that the Town of Purcellville wants to acquire a piece of land owned by the HOA. In fact, they learned that the parcel, a tract of roughly 25 acres between the Catoctin Meadows subdivision, the bypass, and Route 690, figures prominently on the wish list drawn up by the town council at a recent planning retreat.

The 25 acres coveted by the town stretches from the rear of Glenmeade Drive to Route 690 and the bypass, except for Scott King Walker's corner lot at Route 690 and the bypass.

The HOA wasn't surprised by the town's interest in their land; two years ago the town inquired about the possibility of incorporating the parcel into their streambed conservation project, and the HOA voted 80-20 against relinquishing their stewardship of the property. What surprised—and even alarmed—members of the HOA was that they learned about the town council's plans from a local newspaper, not from the council itself.

The town had made no effort to communicate its intentions to the HOA before their annual meeting last Wednesday, even though town Councilmembers Jim Wiley and Steve Varmecky live in the Catoctin Meadows neighborhood and belong to the HOA. Many members of the HOA were angered by the town's disregard, and some were alarmed by the prospect of losing control of the property to a town council that has already shown its willingness to overturn conservation easements and assert the rights of eminent domain.

Dr. Wiley assured the HOA that the town was not interested in cutting trees or in building on the property. He urged the HOA to consider the issue and meet again in a few months to go forward with the town's intentions. But Karl Phillips, a member of the Catoctin Meadows HOA, pointed out that parks and other town lands with specified uses or conservation easements are currently under consideration for other uses, which raises doubts about whether the town considers conservation agreements binding.

"This is another example of poor communication between the Town Council and the residents of Purcellville," Phillips said. He said that the council's failure to inform the HOA of the decision taken at its recent retreat contributed to an atmosphere of mistrust and fueled suspicion that the town may in fact have plans for the property other than conservation.

Scott Harris, president of the Catoctin Meadows Home Owners Association and members of the HOA urged the town to communicate its intentions in writing.

Purcellville Water Use Curtailed

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