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supervisor. Last November, Midlothian District voters gave the edge to Republican Don Sowder over Democrat Gecker to fill the remaining year of Ed Barber's term. Sowder asked Gecker to resign as commissioner, but Gecker opted to complete the final fourth year of his term.

Gecker's chairmanship once again highlights the differences among Chesterfield Republicans. He is the only Democrat on the commission but was backed by Clover Hill Planning Commissioner Russ Gulley and Matoaca Commissioner Wayne Bass - both Republicans - when the county's Republican party leadership would have preferred a lower profile for Gecker.

The defeat of the Greenacres case also displayed some rare emotions by the commissioners. Though they have some significant philosophical differences, the commissioners have comprised a congenial group, more likely to make jokes with each other than terse remarks.

But prior to the vote, the gloves came off. Bass was unhappy that Dale Planning Commissioner Sherman Litton talked to Chesterfield Transportation Director John McCracken about the east-west collector road in the case without including him. Litton said he was trying to solve a transportation problem at the last minute.

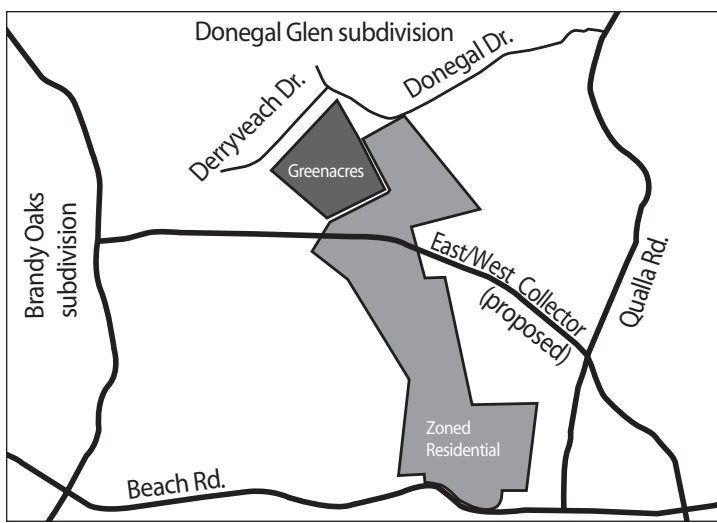
Bermuda Planning Commissioner Jack Wilson chided the commission's majority for prejudging the case. He wanted the commission to follow its normal practice of putting the case "in its best posture" for consideration by the board on Feb. 28.

"Coming at [the zoning case] from a political aspect rather than a professional planning one," Wilson argued, "does a disservice to the county and the board... Private property owners have a right to develop their land. I don't think this applicant has gotten a fair shake on this case."

With more than 100 area residents in the audience opposed to the rezoning, some of them booed his remarks.

Gecker jumped in, telling the citizens, "I would appreciate you giving Mr. Wilson the courtesy of listening..."

Gulley took issue with the allegation that the



Chesterfield Observer

The planning commission voted last week to recommend denial of a 53-acre residential project named Greenacres near the Donegal Glen neighborhood.

case was prejudged and the vote was political. During the recess, Gulley and Wilson quietly exchanged words.

Gecker stated his vote against the rezoning wasn't political. "We don't have the infrastructure in this area," he said. "People say it's only 24 homes, but the cumulative effect is significant. [We shouldn't] perpetuate a mistake on every adjacent parcel [of land.]"

Litton and Wilson abstained from voting, believing that ironing out the language of the last minute proffer changes would allow the case to be decided by the county board with all the details available. That was also the recommendation by the planning staff, but Bass countered that there had been plenty of time for changes during the 120 day deferral.

Greenacres' attorney Carrie Coyner said the maximum number of homes on all 287 acres would be 137 homes. Developers would have to bring county water from more than a mile away, and much of the area would have to be set aside for septic fields since county sewer is not planned for the area.

Many residents of Donegal Glen, adjacent to the north of the proposed community, didn't want traffic cutting through their neighborhood. Being connected to existing neighborhoods is required for safety reasons for police, fire and EMS vehicles. Residents raised safety concerns because access through Donegal Glen gives new residents a short cut to schools on Bailey Bridge Road and shopping in the Hull Street Road corridor. Without

that cut through to the north, residents of the already zoned residential property would have to use Beach Road for a much longer drive. That might even lower the sale price of the land.

Three commissioners sided with the residents against Coyner when she called for a 30-day deferral to revise some of the proffer language. Gecker suggested that might be "serial deferrals," designed to reduce resident turnout.

"[A] 120-day deferral is sufficient," said Bass as the neighborhood

residents applauded. All of the speakers at the public hearing - about 20 residents - opposed the rezoning.

The Greenacres case also demonstrates how neighbors can be organized to overcome a small zoning case. Leader Rick Brindle turned three residents at the first community meeting into 150 strong on a rainy November night for the second meeting. Bass called that meeting "the best turnout I've seen since

being on the planning commission." Brindle also lobbied local media for news coverage of the rezoning.

During the public hearing, residents pointed out that the neighborhood schools - Manchester High, Bailey Bridge Middle and Spring Run Elementary - are well over capacity. A new elementary school south of Hampton Park will alleviate some overcrowding when it opens in the fall. McCracken has expressed concern about the roads in the area. If approved, Greenacres would proffer \$375,000 for the impact that 24 new homes would have on county services.

B&B denied

The planning commission unanimously followed the recommendation of the planning department by recommending denial of a conditional use permit for a bed and breakfast and special events business on Happy Hill Road. Having a commercial business in a residential area does not conform to the comprehensive plan.

Wilson motioned the denial, saying he believed most of the neighbors opposed the business. Most of the speakers favored applicants Neal and Rosemary Hager's application, but many of them appeared to be friends of the Hager's and not necessarily neighbors. One opponent gave the commission a petition with 75 signatures, many from the nearby neighborhood of Longmeadow.

Commissioner Jack



Wilson

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appropriation is used as additional funding for cities with populations of 200,000 or more. Benefiting cities are those whose original "599" funding per capita is less than 65 percent of the average per-capita aid in other large cities. Remaining funds are allocated among smaller eligible cities, counties and towns, based on their relative populations.

The original "599 program," named after House Bill 599, was accepted in 1979 and provided a way for federal funds to be distributed to different localities toward public safety issues. Intended beneficiaries were large cities with high crime rates.

Over the years, many people moved to suburban counties. Despite their low crime rates, those areas became the major beneficiaries of the original formula, based on population size.

The shifting allocation of the 599 funds, benefiting suburban counties, and the increasing violent crime rates in large cities imposed the need for change in the system, said Kaine.

"I commend the governor for stepping up to the plate and taking a significant step to fulfilling the commitment that the state made to center cities and to counties when the annexation moratorium was put in place,"

Hall said.

The 599 bill set two eligibility requirements for cities and counties applying for state police funding. The locality must have a police department with sworn officers meeting the state's minimum training requirements. Qualifying localities also had to give up their right to annex land or population.

Delegate Katherine Waddell, an Independent who represents the 68th District, which includes part of Chesterfield, noted that the governor's proposal is subject to change.

"I am anxiously waiting to see what the final result of the proposal will be," Waddell said, adding that at this point she is not certain of what the proposal will mean to Chesterfield or Richmond. "I don't want to make a definite decision about that until I know what impact it is going to have on my district."

Waddell preferred to consider metro Richmond as a region that's inclusive of Chesterfield and Richmond instead of separating the two areas and talking in terms of conflicting interests.

"We are all in this together, and I think we all need to work for the best for all of the area," Waddell said.

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