

The Capital

South County

Deale developer moves too soon : Fined and ordered to stop grading work

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

It looks like the developer seeking to build 30 homes in Deale jumped the gun last week.

Snyder Development was apparently grading on the former Deale Elks Club property without a permit, earning a county stop-work order that carries a \$1,000 fine.

Don Avery, president of South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development was driving by the site that sits between Owings Beach and Masons Beach roads south of Deale Elementary School and noticed the work.

"I was quite disturbed to see how much damage was being done ... on the old Elks property," he said.

Snyder Development has submitted a plan to build 31 homes on 25 acres straddling Owings Beach Road.

Developer Charles Snyder purchased the property from the Deale Elks Club for \$375,000 in 2002.

Mr. Snyder said last week he was using one parcel as a staging area to avoid clogging up the small road while work was done on the sewer line across the street.

"At the meeting we had people had mentioned they were concerned about a lot of traffic blocking the road," he said.

"I own the property and we did not want to contaminate the area. So we put up super silt fence, and stone so we did not drag mud back on to the road. We used it for staging."

He also said workers could park and materials, like soil dug up in the road operation could be stored there.

"If I was a farmer, and did what I did, no one would say anything ... I understand, people are looking for something. I am trying to do the best I can."

The project has been in the works for years. Mr. Snyder tried to build 62 homes on the same property four years ago but was rejected by the county.

Though the zoning on the property, R-5, would allow five homes per acre. But the land is mostly wetlands, which limits its uses.

After seeing the work on the property, Mr. Avery checked the county's online permit

system and could not find any permits for the work being done. So he called the county.

The county inspector found grading work was being done on the property without a permit.

County spokesman Pam Jordan said the company in effect, "created an illegal staging area... it was clear they were stockpiling equipment." A stop-work order was issued along with a \$1,000 fine. The company was ordered to get a grading permit for the work on the parcel that had been altered sans permit.

"They can't use the staging area until the permit issue is resolved," Ms. Jordan said.

Instead, the company on Thursday submitted an application for a revision of the existing permit.

Such permits are usually tied to a specific parcel of land and the county is not sure whether it would accept a revision.

Local residents decried the first attempt to build on the land and are wary of this latest design because of those wetlands, increased traffic on narrow area roads, and the impact on local schools, among other reasons.

But the fine and stop-work order will not likely affect the ultimate approval of the 31-home plan.

"There is no mechanism in the law to withhold approval or suspend review of a site development or subdivision application because of such a violation," Ms. Jordan said.

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