Dear residents of Belmont Bay,

I would like to give you an update on the status of a couple of issues.

* First, the dumping of construction debris from parcel J&K of Belmont Bay Drive on Land Bay F behind the villas at Belmont Bay.
* Second, the rezoning request (REZ2024-00040 Belmont Bay &SUP2024-00036 Belmont Bay) filed by M&S on March 25, 2024.

M&S obtained a construction permit to build 77 single garage townhomes on Belmont Bay Drive in February 2024. The building site is a part of parcel J&K that was zoned residential in 1999. However, the County approved the site plan which allowed the construction debris to be dumped on Land Bay F behind the Villas condos. Land Bay F is the hole #15 of the previous golf course and is still zoned as golf course/open space.

The building plan was submitted and approved unknowingly by the County without consultation with nor review by the BBHOA because the Caruthers had converted the previous BB Non-Residential Association to a new POA called the Conservancy.

After a Villa resident, Robert Shemeld, filed an appeal with the Zoning Appeal Board questioning the legality of the dumping on the golf course. The County’s Land Development Division, who had issued the construction permit, admitted that the approval of the site plan was issued in error. Subsequently, the construction permit was rescinded in April.

Nevertheless, the developer and the County negotiated a deal that would reduce the height of the dumping berm from 32’ to 12’ and a walking path would be incorporated on top of the berm. The berm with the walkway would be deemed as an amenity to the neighborhood rather than a dump hill. Nevertheless, the 12’ high berm is only 50’ from the closest homes of the Villas.

A new permit was issued that would allow M&S to excavate the J&K parcel and to dump the construction debris on Land Bay F. The responsibility of the maintenance of the walking trail when completed will rest with the property owner, which is the Caruthers now. If the rezoning request- REZ2024-00040- is approved, the new owner would be the PWC Parks and Recreation Department.

Since the dumping site is out of the way and not to be seen by most of the Belmont Bay residents, the Board of BBHOA and many residents elected not to pay attention to it. The builder declared that a 32’ dirt hill was better than 200 homes as requested by the 2022 rezoning request, and a 12’ berm with a walkway is a much better land use. Whether the berm and the walking trail is considered an added amenity to the neighborhood or not, the concern is that the residents of the Villas who are impacted the most by the dumping were not consulted directly by the County’s approving authority.

We believe that the Board of BBHOA should have been involved in the defending of the residents of the Villas, especially residents on Greendale Drive, against the violation of the zoning ordinance. After all, these residents are members of the BBHOA. We also urge the County to have more direct interface with the residents on permits in the future.

As for the rezoning request by M&S, we submitted our comments to the Prince William County Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission on June 28. Subsequently, we have received many comments and endorsements that echo or support our concerns.

Dr. Chris Jones, Director of GMU’s Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center, issued a letter on July 13th expressing his agreement with the Board’s critique on the rezoning request in general, with particular concern about the proximity of the new townhomes to the GMU’s PEREC.

On August 28 the Board of BBHOA at its monthly meeting voted to endorse the comments submitted by the Concerned Citizens United for Belmont Bay.

We also understand that the management of the Refuge has informed the Planning Office of its position on the need for adequate buffer zone: “…, a larger setback than the proposed 50 feet proposed would be in line with our best management practices. We recommend protecting from impacts a naturally vegetated buffer of at least 100 ft on both sides of all intermittent or perennial streams. We also recommend protecting from impacts a naturally vegetated buffer of at least 100 ft on all sides of any wetland. Peer reviewed scientific literature and best management practices within our habitat management plans for forest interior dwelling species recommend a 300' buffer from existing forest edges.”

Significantly, a letter to Chair Jefferson and members of the Board of County Supervisors was issued on September 5th by five environmental organizations, namely Prince William Conservation Alliance, National Parks Conservation Association, Northern Virginia Bird Alliance, Prince William Wildflower Society and Virginia Native Plant Society. (See attached.)

The group of organizations are concerned about the negative impacts by the new development to the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The group urges the BOCS to require a 100-foot buffer between the planned development and the Refuge and to require the 30% open space obligation be calculated independent of any previous developments’ open space commitments. “The Belmont Bay area’s environmental assets are too important to fall victim to encroaching development.”

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions. If you find our work is helpful to preserve our community, I would also like to ask you to share our message and website with your neighbors and other interested residents.

Thanks.

KP Lau, President

Concerned Citizens United for Belmont Bay

PS: I would also like to share with you my speech to the BOCS on 7/16/24 concerning the number of homes which have been approved to build in Belmont Bay in 1999. Without a flyover, the homes in Belmont Bay should be capped at 1,475.