



October 7, 2019

Fauquier County
Department of Community Development
Planning Division
10 Hotel Street, 3rd Floor
Warrenton, VA 20186

RE: Barrel Oak Special Exception Requests

Dear Commissioners:

The Goose Creek Association is a nonprofit, representing over 600 members, whose mission is to protect and preserve the environment and quality of life in the Goose Creek watershed. With that mission in mind, we consider the Barrel Oak Resort Special Exception Requests to be a premature proposal without a plan and without a purpose for the following reasons, foremost among them the environmental threat to the watershed function and quality.

There is no plan. The proposal fails to specify how it conforms to this county's Comprehensive Plan, Rural Lands Plan and zoning ordinances. The proposal does not include elements necessary to evaluate the resort's consistency with other nearby RA zoned properties, including a required Traffic Impact Analysis, identification of the major collector road that would serve the facility, an updated water estimate for the resort, floor plans and elevations.

The proposal cites the Inn at Poplar Springs, now called Poplar Springs Manor, as precedent, but the Barrel Oak proposal is not for a permissible special adaptive reuse of an older, historic residence, like Poplar Springs Manor. The Barrel Oak residence was relatively recently built, so it does not qualify for this special exception. In addition, Poplar Springs Manor offers about half the number of rooms of the proposed Barrel Oak resort (22 rooms versus 42 rooms) and Poplar Springs Manor is situated on a much larger property (173 acres versus 50 acres) with a solid ballroom structure for events (not a tent). Thus Poplar Springs Manor is not a precedent for this proposal.

Further, this County is not equipped to enforce compliance with traffic safety and the noise ordinance that tented, late night events will likely trigger along Grove Lane, which is not a major collector road, as required. How will the county enforce the use of the in-house restaurant only for registered guests when there will be plenty of foot and other traffic from nearby wineries?

The proposed resort sits within the Goose Creek watershed, containing tributaries of the Goose Creek, a headwater of the Potomac River and part of the greater Chesapeake Bay watershed. The proposal does not indicate how those streams and wetlands will be protected from construction, run-off, sewer or septic systems.

In addition, the applicant's assertion that its well can provide adequate water for its operation without detrimentally impacting neighboring wells must be tested. The applicant's estimate for use of water has not been revised to address the likely increased use of water for a resort, or whether the facility will have an onsite laundry that will use even more water than estimated. The proposal fails to cite any impartial, authoritative source for the estimated gallons per day that the resort will use. This is not a plan.

There is no purpose. The proclaimed purpose of the Barrel Oak resort lacks any impartial, authoritative source regarding the demand for such a facility in northern Fauquier County. There are many accommodations available in the nearby town of Marshall, The Plains, Airlie, and Warrenton. The applicant's self-proclaimed "need" for such accommodations on the Barrel Oak property is belied by the applicant's request that the Special Exceptions be allowed for a "minimum, but not limited to ten year window," with all permits issued "as valid for a five (5) year period during which construction could commence." Why would it take ten years or more to address such a perceived need? The demand for this facility is purely speculative. Meanwhile, granting the special exceptions would create a precedent for granting more of these speculative facilities throughout the county.

A hotel or motel accommodation is within the permissible uses for the nearby Marshall service district. The necessary infrastructure for such accommodations is better suited to the service district where public sources of water and sewer could support such a facility.

A resort two miles from the Marshall service district would siphon existing and potential business away from the town of Marshall, reduce the value of RA zoned properties surrounding the Barrel Oak resort, disturb the peace and quietude of the rural agricultural landscape, and threaten the Goose Creek watershed's integrity that Fauquier has worked so hard to protect and preserve.

Sincerely yours,



Lori Keenan McGuinness
Chair, Fauquier County
Goose Creek Association

Cc: BOS, Fauquier County (by mail and email)