Special
Council Meeting
June 19, 2003

A Special Joint meeting of the Elkton Town Council and the Elkton Park Authority was held on Thursday, June 19, 2003 at the Firemen's Activities Building located at 414 South Eastside Highway, Elkton, Virginia. Mayor Wayne E. Printz presided and the purpose of the meeting was to receive comments from citizens regarding various topics, but, mainly, golf course development. The following Council members were present:

PRESENT
J. T. Dean
C. H. Murphy
T. Pence
L. Sigafoose
R. L. Snow
P. Workman

Attorney Nathan Miller, Faye Vickers, Treasurer, Todd McCoy, Director of Public Works/Zoning Administrator, and Richard Carey, Clerk of Council, were also present.

Vice Mayor Murphy read the following statement:

Several Words About the Proposed Golf Course

In July 2000, I sat at my first Council meeting and listened to discussions about whether the Town wished to pursue the idea of a golf course. Four of the sitting Council members gave a flat answer of "no." Two, Bobbie Horne and I, suggested a feasibility study be done to weigh the pros and cons of such an idea. We were outvoted that evening and we both took a lot of negative comments from the public for our suggestion. Looking back now, I do not think it was such a ridiculous idea and had it happened at that time, we may have known our options much sooner.

The Park Authority is to be commended for their effort and time in researching this project. The Authority consists of volunteers who give their dedication, personal time, and determination in recommending a plan to the Council. The hours involved in the research, meetings, and presentations would be astounding to most of us and this group deserves to be applauded for their efforts.

In 2000 and following, the Council's intent was always to allow the Park Authority to pursue the golf course project, but not as a Town owned or Town operated venture. Yes, the Town did lend the Authority funds to conduct some preliminary studies, but had the Town wanted to do anything else with this land, these expenses would still have been realized. I do not consider the funding loaned to the Authority as money lost. In the long run, this amount of money may have saved us a lot of future dollars. Be it right or wrong, the Authority chose to pursue this project in a way other than what Council had intended from the beginning. Personally, I think this is where the Authority lost the public's support, which I believed it had as long as the project remained separate from the Town and posed no liability to the Town.

We have seen the feasibility study and I believe we were all quite surprised at its projections. With all of this, however, the Authority began looking at other options to decrease its debt load and the answer was to develop the real estate in order to offset the debt. Some say the Town would have to give the Authority its land to do this. In return, the Authority promised to assume the bond debt for the land - so can we really say the land was free to the Authority? I think not.

Bruce Forbes presented an article in today's paper about how Elkton should not pursue this project. Is this someone who is really concerned with our Town or merely weeding out competition? It has also been suggested that Norton Consulting had strong ties with another area course and maybe the numbers in our study were not as they should have been. No one knows the answer to these questions for certain, but one must consider all possibilities.

I disagree with some of the public comments about a golf course would ruin the Town because of increased traffic and congestion. Whether we like it or not, Elkton will grow and successful businesses are really what support the Town's tax base and allow the residents to enjoy relatively low tax rates. The market for playing golf is not necessarily from Elkton residents, but rather from a massive pool of people from surrounding areas.

In summary, even with all the controversy and negative comments, I do not believe the idea of a golf course is dead in Elkton and I would like to see it pursued, as I believe it will work in the long run and be an asset to the Town. However, I also believe the Authority now needs to work this project from a different angle and keep the original intent in mind, which is to lease or purchase the land, pursue private investors, or any other financial means that would eliminate funding and liability from the Town itself. I wish the Authority luck and look forward to hearing of any new developments.

Betty Fridley, 147 Sweetgum, read the following statement:

I am not here to be either PRO or CON on the golf course issue...ONLY to add some information that may not have been carefully considered.

1. The new WOODBRIDGE subdivision off of Old 33W, just past the bridge in Elkton, is scheduled for lot sales, hopefully in September (subject to the weather.) You've already seen that clearing of the land has started for the entry way.

   This subdivision is being developed by Jim Sipe & Associated Developers. This group has done (to name 2) "SPRING OAKS" & "BARRINGTON," so everyone knows the QUALITY OF THEIR WORK and the restrictive covenants they include.

   According to Wed's Valley Banner, the estimated cost for many of the Elkton lots will be $50,000.00 and in the northern part of the project be as low as $40,000.00 with the average lot size being 12 to 15,000 sq. feet. At 12,000 sq. feet there would be approximately 3.63 lots per acre & at 15,000 would be 2.9 lots per acre.

   Lots at "Woodbridge" will sell for about $40,000.00, be 2.13 lots per acre or almost ½ acre each.

   I am not here to sell or promote subdivisions (although I am a Realtor with Coldwell Banker Funkhouser Realtors.) BUT I DO HAVE CONCERNS:

2. The Elkton "real estate" part of the project will not be the only source of land

sales, but will have stiff competition; FOR not only is Woodbridge to be considered, but developers want to put in another phase of the Elkwood subdivision. According to the Valley Banner, both the NORTON study & Mr. Dean's proposal would bring money into the project right away, off of the sale of lots within the project. IS THERE A CONTINGENCY PLAN IN EFFECT IF THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN IN A TIMELY FASHION?

3. The NORTON STUDY states that lot sales in established subdivision areas east of H'burg have been at a rate of 15-20 lots per year; but the proposed Elkton course will be RELYING on a first year sales level of 55 lots. That is 2.75 to 3 times the "NORM" rate.

4. According to the Valley Banner, the cost of FLOOD INSURANCE has not been considered and the entire area proposed for the golf course/real estate development has been subject to flooding. One of the first questions BUYERS ask me as a Realtor is: IS THIS HOUSE IN A FLOOD ZONE? I ASK YOU THAT SAME QUESTION: IS THIS PROJECT IN A FLOOD PLAIN? & IF NOT, THE PAPER NEEDS TO REVEAL THE SOURCE FROM WHERE THE INFORMATION CAME.

5. The EDITORIAL by Bruce Forbes in today's DNR should tell us something. I, personally, do not believe his purpose is "scare tactics" to keep Elkton out of "the golf business." I believe there are still some people left in this world who are decent enough to "tell it like it is."

AM I AGAINST THE GOLF COURSE? NO!

I AM, HOWEVER, INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THE CITIZENS OF THIS TOWN NEED AND DESERVE CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT WE WON'T END UP WITH A DEBT LOAD THAT ELKTON'S CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN WILL INHERIT & WEEP OVER.

Sometimes, pride goeth before a fall. We need to tread lightly, to back up if necessary & to stop, if required.

I want progress, I want growth & I want a unified town. Will this golf course meet that criteria? Not just speculation because it seemed like a good idea at the time it was conceived; but "proof positive" that this town will be enhanced and not destroyed.

Pete Bonavita did not see a comparison between what Elkton will offer with developed lots in the proposed golf course area and lots being offered by other emerging subdivisions. He stated the Park Authority plan offers amenities not available to other subdivisions. Mr. Bonavita stated that the feasibility study showed that a stand alone golf course would not be recommended and that point was "not a great shock." He continued that we have four options: (1) Do nothing and we have a debt; (2) We can find investors and let them do it and wholesale the property. "But is that the best for Elkton?" (3) Build a subdivision with a green space; (4) Build a subdivision in which a golf course could be part of the scenario.

Ron Hensley, Monger subdivision, stated that a *Wall Street Journal* article he had read referred to golf as a non-growth sport. Taking into consideration Bruce Forbes' article, the Norton Study, and projections of the profitability of a golf course, he expressed a golf course was not a viable option for the Town of Elkton.

Mildred Shifflett, 112 West Spotswood Avenue, stated a golf course would bankrupt the Town. She was concerned about the exclusion of the middle class, the senior citizens, and the possibility of tax and utility rate increases.

Margaretta Dean, 434 Wirt Avenue, stated it was very sad for Elkton when citizens believed Council had made up their minds to go forward with the golf course without hearing the people say they don't want one. Ms. Dean would like the issue to go to referendum, as well as see the land developed for mass appeal and not just golfers.

Dr. Jon Trabosh stated we need to sell Elkton "as a nice community." A golf course was not the only way to go. He said there were other options. The lots could be sold if we sold Elkton as a place to live. The profits from the lot sales could build a community center, a swimming pool, a park, or other things that everybody could use.

Hazel Crider, 114 Hillside, asked the Park Authority members if they had approached private investors and, if so, what was their responses. David Dean responded that no one had stepped forward so far. An investor would want to know what would be required of him. At this time, the Park Authority does not know what the Town would require of investors.

Tammy Sipes, 105 Mapleleaf, wanted to know if any promises would be made to potential lot buyers that a golf course would eventually be constructed. David Dean replied lots could be sold with the promise of a green space or golf course. He added that negotiations with Dr. Kite for purchase of additional land were unresolved at this time.

Ray Williams, 501 Davis, wanted to know what was here to accommodate tourists and potential golfers. Would someone build a hotel and a restaurant? Mr. Williams stated a conflict

of interest for Council member Snow, Council member Workman, and Pete Bonavita to sit on the Park Authority. Mr. Bonavita offered to resign.

Lee Dearing, 124 North Street, believe the Park Authority lost its direction because Council was not providing any direction. Council must step forward and make something happen.

Glenn Isom spoke in favor of a lake stocked with fish.

Penny Woodward, 314 East Spotswood Avenue, cautioned against uncontrolled growth. Many people have moved here because of the small town atmosphere and that should be cherished.

As there were no additional comments, the meeting adjourned.

MAYOR: _____
Wayne E. Printz, Mayor

RECORDER: _____
Richard D. Carey, Clerk