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Merrywood Apartment Rezoning Sparks Study Of Incorporation

Committee Formed to Fight Project; Appeal Planned to Circuit Court

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Merrywood, widely known as the girlhood home of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, achieved new fame of a sort this week as the center of an explosive controversy over rezoning of the property for Dranesville District's first apartment.

The board of directors of the McLean Citizens Association reacted to the April 18 decision of the Fairfax Board of County Supervisors by calling on the association's local government committee to draft a proposed city charter for McLean.

A group of community leaders hastily formed a Committee for Preserving the Potomac to fight the rezoning. Chairman Samuel E. Neel, a former president of the citizens' association, said, "We are in this fight to stay." The committee asked that contributions for its work be sent to P.O. Box 366, McLean, Va.

Clive DuVal 2d, president of the citizens' association, called a special meeting for Thursday, April 26, and said that a way must be found to assure that the elected representatives of the McLean community reflect the will of McLean residents and to reserve to the community control of McLean zoning actions.

Mr. DuVal, in a letter, to McLean residents, charged a "double-cross" by Supervisor A. Claiborne Leigh, who made the motion as the board approved the 17-story apartment project by a 5-2 vote. The association president said that Mr. Leigh in 1959 had run on a platform saying he stood "firmly against the construction of apartments anywhere in Dranesville District." Mr. DuVal said that, up to the moment the board met on April 18, Mr. Leigh had given no indication that he would vote for the apartment project.

(See the column "Along Chain Bridge Road" on this page.)

Here and there, among businessmen and citizens, the board's decision was praised or accepted as an inevitable or desirable change in McLean area development. But these voices could scarcely be heard in the din that erupted after the gasps had subsided.

Some residents expressed concern over the future of the Potomac "palisades" as a result of the decision to rezone the property of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss along the river. Many people who were relatively unconcerned about Merrywood itself were fearful of the County Planning Commission prophecy that approval of the apartment would lead to others, and the character of the area would be forever changed.

On the point that "apartments are inevitable," the association had expressed the view, through vice-president John C. Bradley, that apartment development need go only where the Board of County Supervisors elects to put it.

Point to Tyson's
The association has a long record of opposition to apartment development in the McLean area and had pointed to Tyson's Corner as a suitable site for a new apartment building.

At the hearing, association spokesmen charged the Supervisors with failing to meet the criteria it had

development. From the standpoint of available highways, traffic congestion, closeness of shopping facilities, adequacy of schools and compatibility with present development, Mr. Bradley said, the application of Sheldon Magazine to build 1,030 units at Merrywood failed to meet the board's standards.

Attorney Lytton H. Gibson, representing the applicant in seeking rezoning of the 46-acre property, contended that the tract, between Chain Bridge Road and the Potomac River near the Arlington County line, is not a part of the McLean community.

Mr. Gibson presented experts in planning, engineering, marketing and design who said the project was feasible and attractive, and not necessarily related to other development that might follow in the area. The attorney pictured Merrywood as an "island," with the George Washington Parkway serving to contain apartment development so that it would not spread toward central McLean.

Testimony Attacked

Testimony by the applicant's witnesses was attacked by John Seeger, who lives along the Potomac River near the Great Falls. He charged that "everyone except the experts employed by the applicant has appeared in opposition to the rezoning."

Mr. Gibson told the board that construction of the three apartment buildings, and 50 river-side town houses would be less destructive of trees and other natural scenery than would be development of the tract for single-family homes. He also presented figures which he said showed that the County would gain considerably more in taxes from the multi-story project than from houses.

Mr. DuVal, speaking for the citizens' association, submitted a letter from the National Capital Planning Commission opposing the rezoning. The letter from Mrs. James Rowe Jr., chairman, said the commission "is most concerned about skyline and the palisades. It is as nearly as possible in the public interest. Low density, slow development is compatible with this objective. Tall buildings are not."

Owen Oakley, speaking for the association, showed that the skyline at McLean is already being built up along the skyline along

Mr. Bradley said the

...vinet applications at ... request on ... Arlington ... similar ... Old Georgetown Pike (Route ... between Turkey Run and ... Forest. This 360-acre tract, ... to the parkway, is also re- ... as the Texas Tract and ...

... in Doubt ... staff, in its ... whether some of ... has enough size ... highways to ... Assistant Plan- ... F. Schumann.

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