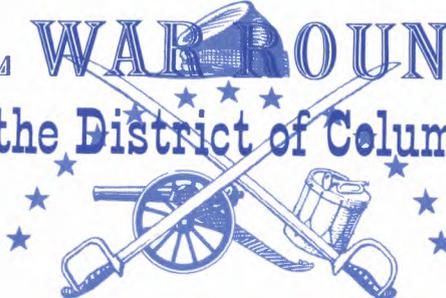


# the CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE of the District of Columbia



April 12, 2022

Ann Wheeler, Chair  
Prince William Board of County Supervisors  
1 County Complex Court  
Prince William, Virginia 22192

Members of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors  
1 County Complex Court  
Prince William, Virginia 22192

**Re: Opposition to Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment #CPA2021-00004  
PW Digital Gateway**

Dear Chair Wheeler and Board Members:

The Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia (CWRTDC) was established in 1951 and is one of the oldest Civil War Round Tables in the Nation. It is a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity with members interested in the history of the Civil War and in historic preservation. The CWRTDC is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia and its membership is primarily composed of residents of the Commonwealth.

The CWRTDC wishes to add its voice to other concerned organizations and citizens in opposition to the proposed CPA for the PW Digital Gateway, including: Brandon Bies, former superintendent of Manassas National Battlefield Park; the Prince William Conservation Alliance; the Piedmont Environmental Council; the Manassas Battlefield Trust; the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Bull Run Civil War Round Tables, the National Parks Conservation Association; the American Battlefield Trust; and filmmaker and historian Ken Burns.

Former Manassas Superintendent Bies called this proposal "the single greatest threat to Manassas National Battlefield Park in nearly three decades." The CWRTDC agrees. Union General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain said,

"In great deeds something abides. On great fields something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear; but spirits linger, to consecrate ground for the vision-place of souls. And reverent men and women from afar, and generations that know us not and that we know not of, heart-drawn to see where and by whom great things were suffered and done for them, shall come to this deathless field to ponder and dream; And lo! the shadow of a mighty presence shall wrap them in its bosom, and the power of the vision pass into their souls."

Manassas National Battlefield Park is such a great field, and it hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year that come to "see where . . . great things were suffered and done for them."

Prince William County's own archaeologist, Justin Patton, wrote that the project would "have a high potential to adversely affect cultural resources in the following forms: indirect effects such as Audio, and Visual; and direct effects in the destruction of the resource. Transportation improvements necessary to implement land use and zoning changes, will likely have an indirect and direct effects on our history as well." Mr. Patton also reported that the staff historian at the Manassas National Battlefield Park provided information that the portion west of Pageland Lane, Pageland farm, may contain Confederate encampments occupied during the First Battle of Manassas in August and September 1861 and associated burials from soldier deaths in camp. The area may also contain soldier camps and burials associated with a field hospital that was in use during and after the Second Battle of Manassas. Confederate artillery batteries were likely located in the vicinity of the railroad bed, based on reports from relic hunters who found unexploded ordinance and dropped bullets. That portion east of Pageland Lane has potential for unmarked military graves and unexploded ordinance from a heated exchange of artillery fire on the morning of August 29, 1862. Mr. Patton therefore recommended that the land in the Manassas Battlefield Historic District and land identified by the American Battlefield Protection Program remain as agricultural estate.

Prince William County and its Board of Supervisors are the guardians of Manassas Battlefield for this generation and the ones to come, just as is the National Park Service. Allowing development of this location as proposed, some of which is historically part of the battlefield, is inconsistent with fulfilling your responsibility as stewards of this most hallowed ground.

The CWRTDC urges you to reject the Comprehensive Plan Amendment #CPA2021-00004, as its adoption will clearly have an adverse effect on cultural and historic properties.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and to participate as a party in this proceeding.

On behalf of the Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia,



Kurt E. DeSoto  
President