

# PRINCE WILLIAM FORUM

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## Stand Firm for Rural Crescent

After reading "Supervisors Assail Ewert's Rural Enclave Plan" {Prince William Extra, May 13}, once again, we are amazed at the short-sighted efforts on the part of the pro-developer/Realtor members of the Board of County Supervisors who are trying to shoot down County Executive Bern Ewert's plan.

Isn't anyone else concerned that Supervisor/developer Ed Wilbourn of Gainesville and Supervisor/Realtor Ben Thompson of Brentsville have a conflict of interest in terms of slow responsible growth in Prince William County? We have lived in the Northeast and Midwest, and now that Manassas is our home, we are appalled that supervisors who make planning decisions in their nighttime board meetings for all of us are Realtors and developers at their "day jobs"!

How about letting the people who pay taxes and want to live here with a good quality of life -- and who don't have any bucks to make off buying and selling real estate for a living -- decide how we want our community to be planned? Ewert and the county planning staff should be wholeheartedly applauded for their foresight in putting forth the "Rural Crescent."

Since we came to the area five years ago from Arlington and Alexandria, our first thought was that Prince William has the wonderful opportunity to present itself as a "middle-class person's Great Falls." In Great Falls, Va., there are many sections where only five- and 10-acre lots are available. It is a very beautiful, well cared for, and very expensive exclusive community. We could not afford Great Falls, but we did want a nice home with more than a postage-stamp lot, so we moved here.

As the thriving Great Falls can attest, and contrary to what board Chairman Kathleen K. Seefeldt says, there is definitely a "market for" such an area. Our draw in Prince William County would be the middle- to upper-middle-class market that can't quite afford Great Falls but wants five or more acres of land and a nice community with a hometown feeling that is slower paced, less congested and friendlier than communities closer to the "city" -- and yet extremely accessible (via the Virginia Railway Express and our multiple roads to the D.C. metro area).

It is not possible to get as much land for less money with a nice house closer in toward D.C. Prince William, is it? Again, there is a market for this!

who want our area to thrive and be more than a bedroom community overrun with inexpensive town homes and lots of tacky strip malls. You are inspirations (and provide much hope) to all of us citizens. Now, how can we get our supervisors to catch that spirit and work for us toward greater ideals and long-term goals?

Increasing the attraction of our Old Town Manassas and initiatives like the Rural Crescent will bring more upwardly mobile families here. These folks, with their higher incomes, will increase the tax base via their higher-priced homes and increased lot acreage. Don't county officials often quote the "magic cost" of a home to be \$250,000 for the county to "break-even" in terms of providing services -- in particular, educating the children?

Mr. Ewert's and the planning staff's rural enclave plan would make this magic dream possible. These folks are working for what is ultimately in the best interest of our community, and they should be greatly supported. Please, those others on the Board of County Supervisors who were silent during that last meeting, please do the right thing for our area. . . .

Please continue to hold firm. We, the taxpaying residents of Prince William, support you! CAROL D. SCHIAVONE, LEON ARON Manassas A Good Idea Trounced

I read that four members of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors objected to the Rural Crescent, the proposed land use plan by County Executive Bert Ewert {Prince William Extra, May 13}. Their stated reasons:

Supervisors Edgar S. Wilbourn III and Loring B. "Ben" Thompson: The rural crescent was based on faulty assumptions.

Chairman Kathleen K. Seefeldt and Supervisor David A. Rutherford: Are we developing something out of sync with the needs of our population?

Seefeldt: The proposal might fail in the face of the market.

Thompson, Wilbourn and many rural landowners: Ewert's plan is short-sighted and will infringe on their property rights.

Rutherford: The rural crescent plan goes too far.

Thompson and Wilbourn: Doubted claims that curtailing growth would improve lagging property values.

Seefeldt: Questioned why the plan would bar extending sewer and water lines to the county side.

Wilbourn: Accused county planners of ignoring the concerns of the Prince William Service Authority.

Mr. Richard C. Thoesen, the Service Authority's director of engineering and waste water: Stated that he and others are worried that curtailing development could limit the agency's ability to pay off future debt capacity,

which already has been calculated on prior population estimates.

Well, it sure looks to me like Mr. Ewert's plan is doomed; when developers finance campaigns, they can have the right questions asked by the right people. But the taxpayers don't stand a chance of their voices being heard. The large farm owners want a huge profit. After having a land use tax write-off on their land, they are now screaming property rights. How about the small land owners who are paying Prince William County's taxes (the highest taxes in the State of Virginia) and would like to see them level off?

This year, our taxes were raised \$70 per household, to save a problem landfill. What will be next? Our sewer and water rates? Use of the park authority facilities? Every service we have in Prince William County is too costly.

Our children suffer the most. Our schools are crowded; in the western end, the children are bused one hour to school. The recreation for children is limited.

On the face of all of this, where are our property rights? How can the Service Authority base cost on growth that may not happen? A few year ago, we had a recession. If this happens again, the Service Authority will not have to worry about extending sewer and water to all parts of our county.

Prince William County is the only county in the Washington area that has mostly residential growth and nothing to curtail it. Why? BOBBY McMANUS Gainesville Extra Wants Your Opinions

Each week, Prince William Extra will post a question, inviting responses from area residents. To comment, you must include your name, address and daytime phone number.

Letters should be exclusive to The Post, and may be edited. You can send responses to our Manassas bureau, at 9254 Center St., Manassas, Va. 20110; send us an e-mail at pwextra@washpost.com; or fax us at 703-392-1406. This week's question: Are you concerned about last week's chemical spill and gas leak at Dominion Semiconductor? Letters to the editor on other subjects are also welcome.

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