

"SPECIAL" MERIFIELD ACRES NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME IV, No.2 -- WINTER, 1997

This special MALA newsletter is being sent to all Merifield Acres property owners to inform them of pending action that may bring another major industrial site very close to the borders of our subdivision. To date, information on the site, and on a potential industry that might locate here, is very sketchy. This is what we understand thus far.

The site itself has been identified. It is off Hwy 821 directly across from the Mecklenburg Cogeneration Plant. It's made up of approximately 25 acres, currently zoned 'agricultural', plus another nine and a half acres already owned by Cogen. In total, this amount of land would be too small for an "industrial park" (as it's being called) since it could probably accommodate no more than one industry. Cogen is expected to provide steam to whatever business locates here, and the railroad spur that supplies coal to Cogen runs through the proposed site. The town of Clarksville has been asked to provide water to the site -- to the tune of 400,000 gallons a day. This is more than half their current intake but they have approved the request. The Town Council and the town IDA (Industrial Development Authority) have voted to recommend approval for development of the site to the County IDA which will have the ultimate decision authority. Coincidentally, a company has approached the Virginia IDA seeking a location for a "forest products" plant. They desire a site that can provide rail, steam, and 400,000 gallons of water per day.

The land in question apparently does not extend to US Hwy 15, and there are no plans for the site access to come from that direction. In effect, all access would be off State Hwy 821, past Cogen to the Burlington Plant intersection on State Road 722 -- a real traffic nightmare at various times of the day. Mr. Charlie Simmons, a local builder/realtor, has worked on the land consolidation effort. Much of it was logged in a 'clear-cut' manner in the spring and summer of last year, though Mr. Simmons states there was no prospect for development at that time.

The Director of the County IDA has already spoken out in favor of the project and, of course, the Cogen Plant and its parent, Duke Power Co., are eager to sell additional steam to a new industry. The Clarksville Town Council and IDA feel that such an industrial site has positive potential, ie, increased employment opportunity in the face of a gradual decrease in the work force at the Burlington Plant (the finishing plant operation has already been moved elsewhere).

Of course, the "negative potential" is what Merifield property owners should be concerned about. Since months of early negotiations were done very secretively, without input from MALA or nearby residents, direct answers to many questions have not been forthcoming. For example:

1. What kind of "forest products" industry requires railroad, steam, and 400,000 gallons a day of pure water? -- a plywood, chipboard, or masonite-type factory?...a pulp mill?...a paper mill? We do not know, and the Town Council voted for this, apparently not knowing either.
2. How many potential jobs will be created, and at what skill level? Is this really a "significant opportunity" for the Clarksville labor market in terms of plentiful quality employment?

3. What pollution concerns have been or need to be addressed? --air? water? ground water? odor? noise? There's already a question as to whether the EPA's limits on various particulate matter have been reached in this area (between the emissions from both Cogen and the Burlington Plant). And, since no return sewer line is being considered, what eventually happens to the 400,000 gallons of daily water? -- the lake?...the air?...the ground?
4. What is the potential for a chemical spill, chemical fire, etc. that could close Hwy 821? This is still the only exit route from Merifield, and the only access route for fire, rescue and other emergency vehicles that would service our sizeable and growing population. We know what chemical spills and road closings are all about.
5. What effect will another large industry have on the 821 traffic? Would the State consider building an access road from 821 to US Hwy 15? Thus far they've refused to consider it.
6. What's going to be the effect on property values in the Merifield area? Also, people living along Hwy 821 have much pride in their properties as they have been there for many years. They are sure that their lifestyles and their property values will be destroyed if additional industrial development is allowed in the area. They may well be right.

Much opposition to this project was expressed at a meeting of the Town Council on February 18. Apprehension was increased by the perception that the Council's approval of the project was irresponsible in light of all the comments expressed, plus the lack of sufficient information upon which to make an intelligent decision.

If you would like to ask questions or express your concerns and opinions to members of the Clarksville Town Council or Clarksville IDA, contact:

Clarksville Town Council

Mayor Benji Burnett\* (374-2483)  
Hobson Keene (374-5740)  
Col. Fred Oettinger\*\* (374-8033)  
Bobby Woltz (374-5332)  
Harold Yuille\*\* (374-8328)  
Mitch Norwood (374-9318)  
Rusty Massingill (374-2589)

Clarksville IDA

Charlie Simmons (374-8456)  
Harold Moore (374-5328)  
Bobby Gupton (374-5759)  
Paul Lesner (374-2274)  
John Howerton (374-8141)  
Jerry Ramsey (374-5604)  
Jim O'Brien (374-5228)

\* With a 4-2 vote to approve, Mayor Burnett did not vote

\*\* Voted not to approve the project

In the meantime, we will continue to watch this matter very closely and keep you informed through future newsletters.

MALA Board Executive Committee