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"I would support an extension if it will help us resolve this without litigation – let's do it." – Councilman Daryl Funk

Trudging toward a decision on FRLP boundary adjustment *Is slow pace on one related to potential litigation on another boundary?*



Council and staff, above, and FRLP team, from left Joe Silek Jr., David Vazzana and Bill Barnett, continue 9 months of discussion to find common ground on Vazzana's annexation request at June 17 work session.

By Roger Bianchini Warren County Report

At a June 21 work session the Front Royal Town Council met with Front Royal Limited Partnership (FRLP) principal David Vazzana and members of his planning and legal team to discuss the status of Vazzana's citizen-initiated annexation filing with the state.

On Sept. 20, 2012, Vazzana notified the town and county of his intention to file the annexation request on 604 acres to the state

Commission on Local Government (CLG). He filed his annexation request to bring the land into the town limits later that week.

Nine months later that status is – let's get another extension of pending deadlines for action in order to talk some more about details of bringing the area adjacent to existing town central-utility supplied residential development into the town limits (where logic might indicate it belongs).

The extension agreed upon was 60 days, though FRLP attorney Joe Silek Jr. said 30 days was preferable to FRLP. The council consensus on the longer extension was to facilitate further planning







commission review.

"It doesn't need to go back to the planning commission – there's nothing for them to see," Silek said in response to the 60day suggestion.

Town Planning Director Jeremy

Camp agreed.

"I don't think it needs to go back to the planning commission unless something new pops up," Camp said.

Gene Tewalt seemed to express a council consensus at the outset

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... within two days (June 17-18) both the town and county went behind closed doors to discuss "specific legal matters ... specifically, Annexation" in the town's case; and "probably litigation" ... such matter being the Route 340/522 North Corridor" in the county's.

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of the work session, "I want it to be ironclad that the town is not being bound to something in the future."

As for extending the timeframe for a town decision on the request, Councilman Daryl Funk said, "I would support an extension if it will help us resolve this without litigation – let's do it."

Councilman Bret Hrbek said he thought it was to the town's advantage to bring the property, long earmarked for development, into the town limits.

"Let's bring the property into town and then invite the county to the table," Hrbek said. He added that his primary concern was that the developer be legally committed to build an east-west connector road in development plans dating back to Centex's efforts to develop the land around 2006-07.

Hrbek's positive perspective

echoed Shenandoah District Supervisor Richard Traczyk's comment from over nine months earlier – "To me, this is a win-win for the town and county," Traczyk said at an Oct. 2, 2012 supervisor's work session.

But you know how it is – always easier said than done with these guys.

Speaking of litigation

County Attorney Blair Mitchell told the supervisors on Oct. 2, 2012, that if the three involved parties reached no positive consensus, a lawsuit by FRLP to facilitate the annexation request would likely come in June 2013.

Now it seems such a lawsuit leading to a state ruling on the annexation request won't be filed before mid-August 2013. – And then only if you were prone to believe our elected officials on both sides of the town-county line can't agree on something they all seem to agree is in the best interests of both the town and county.

Speaking of possible litigation, within two days (June 17-18) both the town and county went behind closed doors to discuss "specific legal matters ... specifically, Annexation," in the town's case; and "probably litigation" and "the litigating position of the public body; such matter being



the Route 340/522 North Corridor," in the county's.

Paranoia strikes deep

On June 17, there was council concern that the developer was

in separate discussions with the county over proffers to cover impacts on county services of what is now planned for development of 818 residential units with some commercial and park components, as well as transpor-



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tation infrastructure. The nowcounty land along Mary's Shady Lane off Happy Creek Road was once targeted for residential development of between 2,400 and 1,862 units by regional developer Centex between 2004 and 2007. FRLP, a family-owned partnership, already has 150 acres in town rezoned for development of as many as 130 residential units nearby.

The town and county currently have an agreement to negotiate proffers for each other on development on their land that would impact services provided by the other municipality.

"There's a number in here that goes to the county," FRLP attorney Silek told council of the draft Voluntary Settlement Agreement between the town, county and FRLP now on the table. "If you rezone, that number has nothing whatsoever to do with proffers to the town."

But some councilmen worried

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any independent proffer agreement with the county could limit FRLP's ability to meet town proffer requirements when rezoning actually was on the table post settlement agreement.

But if separate discussions between the developer and the county were of concern to council on June 17, in February it was Vazzana who was upset the town and county were discussing proffer adjustments without inviting him or his representatives.

Oct. 2, 2012, County Attorney Blair Mitchell told the supervisors Vazzana's annexation request did NOT involve rezoning, so consequently proffer negotiations related to rezoning and development would come AFTER approval by the three parties of a Voluntary Settlement Agreement on the annexation.

However, at the Feb. 21 towncounty-FRLP meeting, Vazzana pointed out, "I'm being asked for \$22 million (in proffers) with no assurances on rezoning. It's as if you're saying 'Trust us, Dave'. I'm not willing to agree to \$22 million in proffers with no assurances other than 'Trust us, Dave.'"

On June 17, Mayor Tim Darr reiterated that detailed town-developer proffer negotiations would come after the land was brought into town and FRLP brought its

rezoning request and eventually a detailed development plan to the town for approval.

In the end the 60-day extension was agreed upon. But Silek said FRLP would present the latest Voluntary Settlement Agreement details to the planning commission at its meeting two days later (June 19) in the hope of quicker movement toward a town decision.



Perhaps the most amazing part of this whole discussion is that proffers related to a rezoning that is not being included in the Voluntary Settlement Agreement are at issue at all. In fact, at the county's first public discussion of the FRLP annexation request on