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INDEPENDENT AND LOCALLY OWNED SINCE 1890

The Columbian

www.columbian.com

SERVING CLARK COUNTY, VA

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2014 ◆ \$1.00



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CP16#0027

Rural

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lots in Forest-40 zones.

The county heard from 618 of 1,079 property owners from the two zones. An overwhelming number (72 percent in the agricultural zone, and 82 percent in the forest zone) wanted smaller minimum parcel sizes. A majority of respondents also said they would like to "cluster" new homes on their property.

For example, a 50-acre lot could be split into five 10-acre parcels, and have five homes on minimum 1-acre lots.

The idea of smaller minimum lot sizes grew out of the Rural Lands Task Force, which suggested giving property owners more flexibility. Commissioner Steve Stuart said he's heard from people frustrated that they can't build a second home on their land for a family member. Some respondents wrote

County studies zoning in rural area

Discussion covers allowing smaller minimum lot sizes, property tax implications

By STEPHANIE RICE
Columbian staff writer

A Wednesday discussion on allowing smaller minimum lot sizes in certain agricultural and forest zones included a lesson on property taxes for Clark County Commissioners Tom Mielke and David Madore, both of whom questioned why property taxes would increase even if property owners didn't decide to split up their land.

As part of a larger review of rural land rules, the county contacted owners of land zoned Agriculture-20, which refers to 20-acre minimum lots zoned for agricultural use, and owners in Forest-40, which refers to 40-acre minimum lots zoned for forestry use.

County planner Jose Alvarez said there are grandfathered or nonconforming smaller lots in those zones. The county surveyed people who own at least 10 acres in the agriculture zone and at least 20 acres in the forest zone.

Owners were asked whether they want to keep the status quo, or allow 10-acre minimum lots in the Agriculture-20 zone and 20-acre minimum

comments on the survey, encouraging commissioners to decrease the minimum lot size: "Please hurry, have been waiting for this for 30 years," and "These changes would help tremendously," wrote two respondents, while others wanted the commissioners to set the minimum lot size at 5 acres, equal to the minimum lot size in surrounding areas zoned rural.

Others were critical of the county's idea. "This is the worst money-grabbing move I have seen thus far... not only no but hell no, I moved out here to be left alone. Should have moved out of Clark County," wrote one owner. "It ain't broke don't fix it," wrote another property owner. "You must have extra money to throw away. I sure don't."

One resident wrote that a 10-acre minimum would be preferable, "if it doesn't increase my taxes." Mielke thought that by setting a minimum lot size, owners would be forced to subdivide.

"If you go back and mandate that they divide their property up, that could increase their property taxes," Mielke said. "That was one of the things we were accused of, for allowing the option."

Christine Cook, a deputy prosecutor, explained that setting smaller minimum lot sizes wouldn't require people to subdivide. "I understand the concern there, but nothing would mandate that anybody divide their property," Cook said. "Anybody who wants to retain a larger sized property certainly would be able to do that."

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