

November 5, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

FROM: Joe Del Balzo, Subdivision Section

SUBJECT: Preliminary Plan 4-03088  
Glen Dale Golf Course Property

This preliminary plan is scheduled for hearing before the Planning Board on November 13, 2003. The property is the site of the Glen Dale Golf Course located at the intersection of Prospect Hill Road and Old Prospect Hill Road. It is approximately 124.89 acres of land in the R-R Zone. The applicant proposes to subdivide the property into 226 lots for single-family detached housing using the cluster subdivision option. The cluster subdivision approach allows the applicant to reduce the minimum lot size required in exchange for increased open space that has scenic, recreational, or preservation value.

The application was filed on September 9, 2003 and was before the Subdivision Review Committee on September 26, 2003. At the Subdivision Review Committee meeting, staff raised several issues with the applicant, his engineer and attorney. Staff requested revised preliminary and tree conservation plans and a revised forest stand delineation. Staff noted that the preliminary plan originally filed fell short of the required findings for cluster approval. Section 24-137(a) sets forth the purposes of the cluster regulations. Cluster development is an optional approach and, as stated in Section 24-137(d), use of the cluster technique, which allows modification of development regulations, "should not be construed to be authorized as a matter of right." Pursuant to Section 24-134(a), cluster subdivisions must, among other purposes:

- **Result in improved living environments**
- **Promote more economic subdivision layout**
- **Encourage a variety of designs and dwellings**
- **Encourage ingenuity and originality in total subdivision layout and individual site and building design**
- **Encourage compatibility with historic resources**
- **Preserve open space to serve recreational, scenic and public service purposes**

To help the preliminary plan meet these purposes, staff suggested that the applicant (1) use the contour of the land to drive the layout of the development, (2) open up large views into the open space, (3) reduce the density in the northwestern portion of the site where wetlands and streams occur [this area is ideal for the retention of priority woodland in the wetlands, but the original and revised plans remove those wetlands and the woods associated with them], and (4) increase the area of open space around the existing historic house on the property.

The applicant met with staff of the Subdivision Section and the Historic Preservation Section on October 3, 2003. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issue of opening up more area around the historic site. While the applicant agreed to remove some lots around the historic structure, staff made the applicant aware that agreement regarding the area around the historic site did not ensure staff support for the cluster subdivision. Other issues raised at the Subdivision Review Committee meeting were still outstanding and needed to be addressed.

On October 9, 2003, the applicant submitted revised plans in an attempt to address the staff issues. The open space around the historic site has increased, and a few small windows into other open space areas have been added. But the plan remains largely the same as the original submission. It still falls short of the requirement for cluster subdivisions that they provide a better living environment than would a conventional development. Provision of the minimum required amount of open space does not necessarily translate into a better living environment, especially when that open space is essentially hidden from the community behind lots.

On November 4, 2003, the applicant's attorney advised staff that he would submit a letter waiving the 70-day time limit and requesting a continuance. Staff received that letter on November 5, 2003. While staff believes that the plan may ultimately be supportable, albeit with major changes, staff must recommend disapproval of the application as submitted.