

## **Montrose Plantation: Planning Commission OKs new designation for massive development**

*By Stephen Guilfoyle / Editor*

The first step in bringing in a 6,000 acre commercial/residential development to Chester County was passed Tuesday night.

The Chester County Zoning Commission gave approval to an amendment to the county's zoning ordinance, that will allow the Montrose Plantation development to be classified as an "Economic Development Zone."

Such a designation is new to the county's zoning ordinance, put on in addition to classifications like residential, industrial and commercial.

The commission discussed the measure for about 90 minutes to an hour among its members.

County Economic Development Director Karlisa Parker also attended Tuesday's commission meeting.

The Montrose Plantation development covers about 6,000 acres, just about 3,500 are currently being put into the new designation, according to a legal notice the commission ran in The News & Reporter last week.

It is just one step in a plan to bring about 8,000 homes, possibly 2,000 town homes, commercial space that includes restaurants, hotels, a mall and office space, along with two golf courses, one of them possibly private.

The development will have several housing areas or subdivisions, some of which may be gated communities, the first such in Chester County.

All the land in the new development zone and all the land in the planned development are owned by a division of Graham Enterprises, a company owned by Mel Graham of Charlotte.

Graham, a nephew of evangelist Billy Graham, unveiled his vision for the development that may transform the county.

He sees the community as being a place for people who work in Charlotte to live with most of the big city amenities but who are still able to get away from the worst parts of urban life such as congestion. He says Montrose Plantation is just as close to Charlotte as other developments that are east and north of the city.

The development will also be as close to Columbia as it is to Charlotte, almost in the exact middle on Interstate 77.

The zoning approval received Tuesday night is just the first step.

County Council must uphold the commission's decision, voting on it at three separate meetings.

Graham said he also has to get approval from the state Department of Transportation to put in a new interchange at about mile marker 58 on I-77 to make the development work. He says that might take up to three years if everything goes well.

He also has to arrange for water from the Chester Metropolitan District and wastewater treatment from the Town

of Great Falls before he can begin construction.

But Graham said the southern end of the development touches on S.C. Highway 97 about a mile from Exit 55, so when he has the water, sewer and zoning situations handled, he can begin working on housing on about 1,000 acres in that area of the development.

He plans to also start working on one of the golf courses that will line Rocky Creek, which divides most of Montrose Plantation once the approval is given, he said last week.

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