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## News

### Queenstown Harbor resort concept plan presented

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QUEENSTOWN Members of the Queenstown Planning Commission have gotten a look at the concept plan for a lodge and resort being planned adjacent to the Queenstown Harbor Golf Course and overlooking the Chester River.

The plan was presented by Lex Birney, CEO of The Brick Companies, which owns the golf course and the 40 acres of land on which "Queenstown Harbor: A Green Key Resort" would be built. The presentation took place during the commission's Oct. 7 meeting.



An artist's rendering of one of the Living Lodges for guests proposed at the Queenstown Harbor Resort.

According to the concept plan, the resort will consist of residential villas, manor cottages, the existing Manor House, conference center, restaurant, spa building and guest rooms, other guest rooms, and river cottages. There would also be about 8-1/2 miles of hiking trails.

Birney said the square footage would be about 90,000 square feet and no more than 100,000 square feet. The plan calls for 80 guest rooms to be built initially with perhaps another 40 more in the future.

"The buildings will fit right into the landscape of the golf course," he said. They will be separated visually from each other by natural vegetation and newly-vegetated green walls, he explained.

He showed concept drawings for several of the structures.

"What we're trying to accomplish is...demonstrate how these buildings are connected to the environment," Birney told the commission. He said the resort is designed to appeal to families and individuals as well as corporate users on a year-round basis.

"This is generally the way the project would lay out," he said, noting that the concept drawings are not final versions.

"We really want to hear from everybody. Honestly tell us what you think," Birney said, adding that stakeholders include the town, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Commission, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Queen Anne's County. "We've worked collaboratively from the beginning and want to continue to do that, so that when the thing is built and up everybody goes 'wow, that's just exactly what we all talked about.'"

He said the resort is being planned to appeal to a "broad constituency for a long period of time."

Plans also call for utilizing part of the existing Manor House beyond the golf course pro shop as a museum and conservancy where artifacts and exhibits highlighting the property's history over more than 300 years can be displayed. Archaeological digs earlier uncovered many artifacts.

During the presentation, several planning commission members asked questions, but the panel did not take a position on the proposal, saying it would study it.

Birney first unveiled plans for the lodge and resort in 2005, calling it a project that will "blend in with the environment." He also said it would complement existing Queenstown architecture and would be located behind a 300-foot buffer along the Chester River as required by regulations.

In April 2006 The Brick Companies submitted a petition to annex the golf course and the property on which the resort would be built into Queenstown. The town commissioners approved the annexation on Dec. 19 of that year.

The annexation included an ordinance to allow the newly-annexed land to continue on well and septic until the town can provide water and sewer capacity. Under town regulations, anything within the town limits has to be served by municipal water and sewer.

The town is currently considering plans for a new sewage treatment plant with increased capacity.

Another ordinance that was part of the annexation petition establishes two zoning districts on the annexed land the Queenstown Resort Development District (QRD) on which the resort would stand, and the Queenstown Countryside District (CS) for the golf course.

Ryan Showalter, an attorney representing Birney, told the planning commission his client will return with a preliminary site plan and that the commission is required to hold a public hearing on it.

Showalter said The Brick Companies hopes for approval of the preliminary site plan by the commission sometime in December, clearing the way for other deliberations involving Queen Anne's County and the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Commission.

A final site plan will follow, hopefully in February, which will have to be acted on by the town planning commission and the town commissioners, he said.

"It's our hope that by mid-to-late next summer we will have completed the town site plan process, the critical area commission review process, and the county water and sewer plan amendment process," Showalter said.

Once that's all completed, he said, the company hopes to begin construction around September 2010 with a completion date around the end of December 2011.

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