

# Orange County Review

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## EDITORIAL

### PEC property only good for Gordonsville

Something as seemingly innocuous as a land transfer for a park boiled over into a dispute at the Gordonsville Town Council recently.

On the agenda was a “resolution of support” regarding a purchase of property to expand a park.

And the town wouldn't even be making the purchase; it would be a private gift to Gordonsville. The transfer is being coordinated and facilitated by the Piedmont Environmental Council.

The tract would create a contiguous park by linking several existing pieces of property: Verling Park and Dix Memorial Pool to the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company fairgrounds.

Sounds like a good deal, right?

One council member, however, objected to a number of items in connection with the proposed land transfer, its origins and the mechanism for its protection as parkland.

Jim Bradley said the council needed to look more closely at the proposed transfer, suggesting that the council didn't yet know enough about it. Other council members pointed out that the council already

had walked the property, discussed it at work sessions and seen a mock-up in its agenda packet of what the park might look like — subject to the council's final decisions.

Bradley implied that the origins of the proposal were suspect because it was based on results from a community charrette conducted by University of Virginia architecture students and released in 2018. He said the charrette was not initiated by the town and implied instead that it was done to serve the interests of the PEC and UVa.

“It was a project for their class,” he said. “They were getting graded on it. You sat over there and told them where you wanted parks.”

Neither of those elements need disqualify the project. As Mayor Bob Coiner noted in a spirit of practicality, not everyone is concerned about the project's start in life if the result ends up being good for the town.

Bradley also objected to the easement that would be placed on the property upon its donation to Gordonsville. He wanted to know more about the nature of the ease-

ment and again accused the PEC of self-interest: “You're doing this so you can get another easement under your belt.”

Even if true, how would that work against the town of Gordonsville?

Bradley said he'd heard of an easement in Northern Virginia that he said prevented the sale of vegetables grown on the property.

He has a point that easements should be carefully crafted. But easements are typical in this type of land transfer. Donors won't give land for parks unless the use is protected; they want to make sure that a gift for parkland is indeed used for parkland and not, say, as a site for a subdivision.

In any case, the resolution on the agenda was simply a vote of confidence to allow the project to move slowly forward. It did not commit Gordonsville to any purchase of land, any acceptance of land or any specific types of easements on the land.

We're happy to say that the resolution passed, 4-1. Gordonsville is now a step closer to having a larger park of linked parcels that will serve its residents well.