

Letter to T & G

Feb, 2017

Variance should not be granted

Dear Editor,

A letter in last week's Tribune & Georgian supported the granting of a zoning "hardship variance" to the prominent Candler family to allow them to subdivide their Cumberland Island property for, ultimately, the building of 10 residences for a "family compound." I take strong issue with this position and would respectfully point out:

- The Candlers bought their property in 1998 with full knowledge that it was affected by the surrounding Cumberland Island National Seashore, which was established in 1972.

- The present zoning, conservation preservation, (CP) of the Candler property was enacted by the Camden County commis-

sion in 2008, effective Jan. 1, 2009, after going through an extended preparation and analysis period involving at least four public notices published in this newspaper and at least two meetings of the county commission whereby interested citizens could be heard. The Candlers had the opportunity to object to the zoning or request modifications, but apparently they did nothing.

- There are five requirements in Camden County's zoning code that are prerequisite to granting a "hardship variance." The Candlers have complied with none of these requirements which include, for example: "The variance is necessary to provide the applicant the same basic property rights that other property owners in the same zone or vicinity possess" and the Candlers presently have exactly the same rights as other property owners in the same zone; "the variance would not be materially detrimental ... to property in the same zone or vicinity in which the property is located ...;" and "relief, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to the public good ..."

- The two principal economic drivers of Camden County are the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base and the Cumberland Island National Seashore. Anything

that could be detrimental to either of these economic drivers should be resisted in the strongest way. The Candlers' efforts could "turn off" prospective Cumberland Island visitors, with major negative effects upon Camden County's businesses that depend upon Cumberland Island visitors.

The Cumberland Island National Seashore is a treasure for us here in Camden County, for our country and for the world. Having national and international focus on this pending threat to this fragile treasure is bad for all of us. We pray that the county commissioners, at their meeting on April 4, will refuse to approve this variance.

*Bill Bruce
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