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Rescue Reston Launches Campaign to Save Hidden Creek Open Space

New advocacy tools, enhanced social media, and talented volunteers are proof this group should not be underestimated

July 3, 2020: The familiar yellow shirts of Rescue Reston volunteers are busy defending Reston's open space again. Reston's leading advocacy group was called to action by the recent aggressive efforts of Wheelock Communities to close the golf course and develop up to 1,000 housing units. Wheelock, funded by a Connecticut-based real estate investment trust, purchased Hidden Creek Country Club in 2017.

In June Wheelock held meetings with homeowner's clusters surrounding the Hidden Creek Course. Daniel Green, Wheelock Principal in charge of residential land and homebuilding investments, closed each meeting with a pitch to "contact Supervisor Walter Alcorn to open the comprehensive plan for golf courses in order to learn more and explore what might be possible on the Hidden Creek property."

Wheelock's latest tactics dangle pretty pictures and provide contradictory information comes five months after Supervisor Walter Alcorn confirmed (again) that Wheelock bought property that is zoned a golf course, and the Comprehensive Plan would not be opened to make changes to that land use.

"The golf courses will not be part of this Comprehensive Plan review," Alcorn stated in a January 17, 2020 interview with Reston Patch. "I have let the owners of Hidden Creek know that. The golf courses are in the Comprehensive Plan as golf courses. ... There has been some confusion out there. That's going to be the case. But this Comprehensive Plan review will not touch the courses. Their designation in the Comprehensive Plan is golf courses."

Lynne Mulston, chair of the Rescue Reston North Committee, summarized the situation. "Congratulations, Wheelock! You bought property at a recreational price that is zoned for a golf course and you own a golf course with a clubhouse, tennis courts, driving range and a swimming pool."

According to Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan, "The Reston National [Tax Maps 17-4 ((11)) 4A, 26-1 ((6)) 96, 97, 26-2 ((2)) 8, 26-2 ((3)) 8B, and 26-2 ((5)) 4] and Hidden Creek Country Club [Tax Maps 17-2 ((1)) 19, 17-2 ((24)) 1, 17- 4 ((1)) 11, 17-4 ((2))(37) 2, and 17-4

((10)) 2] golf courses are planned for private recreation use, more specifically to remain as golf courses."

The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan also recommends at least one golf hole per each 3,200 persons. Current projections for Reston's population, based on already approved housing construction, would thereby call for two 18-hole golf courses in Reston, per the County's standards. Reston fulfills this amenity with no cost to County taxpayers.

Despite Alcorn's clear position, Wheelock persists with its lobbying campaign by presenting their plan to redevelop the Hidden Creek property as a "done deal" to area homeowners.

Mulston explained, "Wheelock spends more time discussing an additional five miles of pathway (to add to Reston's existing 55 miles plus Reston's existing access to the W&OD trail, the Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail and nearby paths in Lake Fairfax Park) than time spent focusing on the housing lots they will sell off to individual homebuilders."

Rescue Reston launched a campaign of its own to educate the community and preserve the Hidden Creek land use as open space as directed in the Comprehensive Plan. The campaign includes new online advocacy technology to help the community get involved; enhanced social media presence; and an expanded, energetic, and talented group of volunteers. As part of the campaign kick-off, on July 4th volunteers are lining the neighborhoods surrounding Hidden Creek with American flags and "Save Hidden Creek Open Space" signs in supporter's yards.

Connie Hartke, Rescue Reston's President explained the history and significance of open space in Reston, "From its inception, the planned community of Reston was designed to have concentrated open space and concentrated development. It also was based on diversity of socioeconomic households."

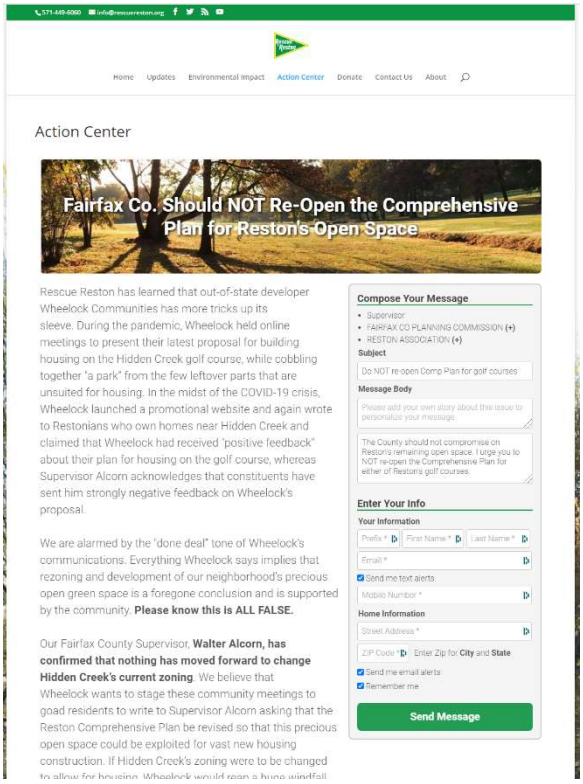
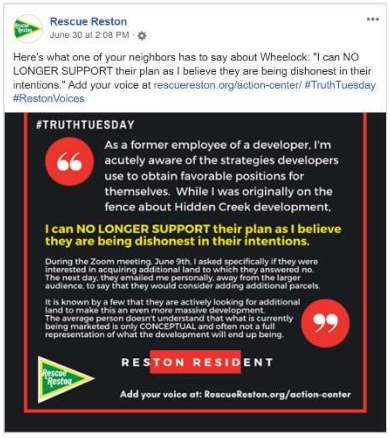
Hartke quoted from a letter sent to Supervisor Alcorn by a renter in Charter Oak apartments that shows exactly Bob Simon's original planning intent: "[I live] in an apartment that overlooks Hidden Creek, and I love living in an area that provides such lovely open space - and is NOT the row after row of homes stuffed into "park" space that seems to be taking over everywhere. I proudly tell people that I live in Reston and how it is set up to maintain these wide-open green spaces, uncluttered by the development. Someone like me, with my income, is usually not afforded the chance to live in places like this."

Rescue Reston is a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving Reston's open space.

The volunteer-driven organization works to defend Reston's recreational green space at the 164-acre ***North Course***, Hidden Creek Country Club, and at the ***South Course***, Reston National Golf Course, a 166-acre Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program Golf Course on the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The group was brought to action because of a July 27, 2012 proposal by the investor-owners of the Reston National Golf Course to turn the golf course's open space into a residential development. In 2015, in the face of an attempt to develop Reston National Golf Course (the South Course) for residential use, the Fairfax County Circuit Court ruled in effect that the course could not be redeveloped without an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Reston National subsequently was sold to a developer whose plans for the course remain unclear.

Rescue Reston Action Center Technology and Social Media Enhancements

RescueReston.org/action-center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