

# Developer to purchase sewage plant

## But plans for 1,600-home development still on hold

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The county will not buy a Piney Orchard sewage treatment plant, clearing the way for a developer who wants to use the facility to serve a major mixed-use community proposed for west county.

County Executive John R. Leopold said he spoke with members of the Department of Public Works and Planning and Zoning on Wednesday and decided the county won't need to buy the plant from Constellation Energy.

That leaves the door open for John Stamato, president of Ribera Development LLC and a managing member of the Piney Orchard Utility Co.

A statement from Ribera said the plant will be used to handle wastewater from Arundel Gateway, a 300-acre development off Route 198, just east of Route 295.

When complete, the community will include a mix of 1,600 townhouses and condos, several restaurants, shops and offices. Ten percent of the homes will be within the price range of teachers, firefighters and police officers.

Arundel Gateway is within the boundaries of the Maryland City's water treatment plant, but Ribera had trouble negotiating a plan with the National Park Service to bring pipelines across Route 295, said Eric DeVito, the company's vice president. The park service has jurisdiction over the road.

"This gives us options," Mr. DeVito said.

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## PLANT

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But even with the wastewater issues apparently resolved, the project won't move forward until the county completes its new General Development Plan.

Mr. Stamato withdrew sketch plans for Arundel Gateway a month ago because he couldn't get the required zoning changes.

Mr. Leopold said he doesn't want to make piecemeal zoning changes.

"I've taken the position that I'm not going to approve spot zoning," he said. "I'm going to require that growth occur in a very measured and comprehensive way through the General Development Plan."

Mr. Stamato has said county

officials told him his zoning changes will be included in the new General Development Plan, which is more than a year from completion.

In the meantime, Ribera will retain Maryland Environmental Services to run the plant and plans to settle with Constellation on the property this summer, Mr. DeVito said. Financial terms of the deal weren't revealed.

The sewage plant doesn't conform with Constellation's plans, said Lawrence McDonnell, a spokesman for the company.

While the county doesn't currently plan to buy the plant, it might be a good idea to do so eventually, said County Councilman Jamie Benoit, a Democrat from Piney Orchard.

"It's entirely possible that there will not be adequate sewage treatment down the road,"

he said. "Ribera will improve the plant, and it would behoove the county to own it at some point."

Mr. Benoit said that if the Oak Hill juvenile detention facility closes and the county opens that land to development, it will be particularly important to have plentiful public sewage facilities in the far stretches of west county.

"The key is to ensure that the infrastructure keeps pace with the new growth," Mr. Leopold said.

If the county needs to increase its sewer services along the Route 198 corridor, Mr. Benoit wants to find a way for the developer and public works to consolidate their construction efforts and mutually decrease expenses.

Several pipeline routes from Piney Orchard to the proposed

development have been studied, but the exact path hasn't been determined, Mr. DeVito said.

"It could cross the Patuxent Research Refuge, but it doesn't have to," he said.

Mr. Leopold said the county has discussed buying the sewage plant before, but no negotiations have occurred during his administration.

Mr. McDonnell said Constellation has also discussed selling the plant to other organizations, but he wouldn't name them.

The sewage plant began operations in 1990 and is permitted to treat 1.2 million gallons of sewage per day. When Piney Orchard is fully developed it will produce about 700,000 gallons daily.

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