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INSIDE THIS WEEK



The Smithfield Center is booked up for the rest of the year.
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INSIDE THIS WEEK

From blocks of pine to Roman chariots and more at the annual Pinewood Derby
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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The previous administration had a few people who were unwilling to step up to the plate and assist us.”

— Smfd. Assistant Fire Chief Jerry Hackney about bills for the new building

Jordan house up for sale



Staff Photo by Diana McFarland

Built prior to the Civil War, the Jordan House was once considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is located on Route 10 near Benn's Church. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources advised against moving the house.

Historical Society lacks funds to restore old house

By Diana McFarland
News editor

Once a key bargaining chip in the controversial Benn's Grant development, the now deteriorating Jordan house is up for sale.

The Isle of Wight Historical Society no longer wants the circa 1858 farmhouse, although it fought for its possession for more than a decade.

So, rather unceremoniously, the Historical Society gave the house back to landowners Richard Turner and Henry Morgan at a meeting Jan. 25.

The Historical Society doesn't have enough money to restore it, said Society historian Carolyn Keen.

Currently, there's \$37,000 in the Historical Society's bank account.

According to the Benn's Grant proffer agreement, Turner and Morgan were to sign over the

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House

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deed to the house to the Historical Society along with \$200,000 to move and restore the structure on a subdivided parcel on the property once the project formally got underway.

However, as Benn's Grant sits idle, "it's pretty apparent that the economy has set everything back up there," said Turner about the 253-acre development that is approved for 240 apartments, 320 single-family homes, two big box retailers, a hotel, additional retail and commercial space as well as the Riverside medical complex.

If the house is sold, the proceeds could be donated to the Isle of Wight Historical Society, Turner said.

There's some urgency to selling the old house since it's long been subject to the vagaries of the weather. About two years ago there was a minor dust-up over whether the missing doors and windows should be covered with plywood. After some wrangling with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the windows and doors were covered with plywood and the roof was repaired. However, roof issues have resurfaced and some of the plywood has fallen off, causing further concern

about the continued deterioration of the house.

"It won't last long if the weather gets in it," Turner said.

An inspection of the house Friday revealed that the foundation and the structure itself was in fairly good condition, Keen said.

The Historical Society asked Turner to "mothball" and stabilize the structure until it's sold. Former Historical Society President Jerianne Gardner suggested demolishing the back portion, which was added in the 20th century.

Turner agreed to give the Historical Society enough money to mothball and weather-proof the house. The process will begin in February.

"I think up on that hill, with a big sign. We'll try that first," Turner said about initial attempts to sell the house, which would be moved to another location. Another idea was to piece it out to interested buyers.

At one time, Virginia Beach-based developer Armada Hoffler was involved in developing Benn's Grant and used the Jordan house as an icon for the development. Before they backed out, Armada Hoffler also

offered to assist moving and restoring the house to a subdivided location on the Benn's Grant property.

Built by Charles Driver Jordan, soldiers camped around the house during the Civil War. Later it was one of Isle of Wight's first schools.

As one of the oldest structures in that area, it was probably used as a landmark for travelers, said historian Albert Burckard.

The house has a unique staircase that ascends to a landing and then forks off into two directions. Its moldings, exterior trim and mantels are also thought to be of value.

Moth-ball party

The Isle of Wight County Historical Society is sponsoring a "Moth Ball Party," Saturday, Feb. 4, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Charles Jordan house on Benn's Church Blvd. The "party" is being held to secure the Jordan house from further deterioration. The "party" is open to all Historical Society members and anyone who would like to contribute their experience with historic properties. Bring tools, such as hammers, nails, drills and ladders. The team leaders are Lee Duncan and Bill Somerset and can be reached at 357-0631.

When Turner and Morgan bought the house in the late 1990s, it was included in the proffers offered by their company, Isle of Wight Materials — a former borrow pit — when it applied for a conditional use permit. The proffers

stipulated that the house would be converted into an office/living area, but there was no time limit on the proffer.

Instead it has remained vacant for 25 years, and all the fireplace mantels were stolen or destroyed.