

Board approves of sawmill that will create jobs

By Christina Lopes
Reporter

MILFORD—County officials have given the green light for a sawmill to crank up near Bowling Green and create 14 new jobs that pay \$8 to \$20 an hour.

The Caroline County Board of Supervisors on Nov. 26 unanimously approved a special exception permit to allow the old sawmill to begin operation again at 21529 Bagby Road.

The board had previously approved an expedited hearing following a public hearing held by the Caroline County Planning Commission.

The current owner and applicant James E. Hill is

selling the property, which has not been used as a functioning sawmill in over two years, to John Rock Inc., a wooden pallet manufacturing company based out of Philadelphia.

Mike Finchum, Caroline director of planning and community development, said the mill is subject to current zoning regulations, which require a special exception permit to be allowed to operate as a sawmill again.

The Planning Commission sent the request to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation for approval. Finchum also mentioned the applicant's request for modifications of

operation hours.

The hours of operation were set as 6 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. until 12 p.m. on Saturday. The sawmill will be closed Sundays.

Supervisor Reginald Underwood wanted to know if there had been any issues when the mill was operational. Finchum responded that he "did not see any issues in the file."

Finchum also noted that in 2006 or 2007 a request for an expansion of the mill was made, and was approved by the county. No expansion was made, however.

Owner of John Rock Inc., Bill MacCauley, said the reopening of the sawmill in

Bowling Green would only bring good things to the county. "We're here to bring you jobs," MacCauley told the board. Since there has been activity at the mill, "already 15 people have come by looking for jobs," according to MacCauley.

MacCauley told the board that the sawmill would have 12 to 14 open positions for county residents. He further stated that the positions would pay \$8 to \$20 an hour, depending on the department.

MacCauley told the board that the company plans to "update and modernize" the structure in order to meet current safety requirements.

During the hearing one Bowling Green resident, who lives on the same road where the mill is located, expressed opposition to the reopening of the business. The resident's main concern seemed to be the width of the road, stating that it was "not wide enough for cars and trucks to pass safely."

The citizen also told the board that she had heard rumors of the company putting "trailers with illegal immigrants" on the property for labor. She spoke of a dangerous curve on the road, and told the board "you're taking people's lives."

Floyd Thomas, chairman of the Board of Supervisors, added some levity to

the discussion by commenting that "this was a sawmill back when I had hair." He asked if there were any accident reports associated with traffic on that road since the mill had originally opened in the 1960s.

Finchum reported that there were no accident reports on file. He suggested that road improvement questions go to the Virginia Department of Transportation. "It is a VDOT issue," Finchum said.

The board will review the progress of the mill one year from the date of occupancy and decide whether to renew the agreement.

Former Miss USA describes life in the fast lane

By Eric Miller
Editor

Former Miss USA Tara Conner told a group of recovering men and women that if she had heard her story when she was 14, then her life wouldn't have become such a mess.

A resident of Los Angeles, the model, actress and singer/songwriter traveled through Virginia this week to promote hope for those recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. She made a stop in Bowling Green and had Kodak moments with dozens ranging from local pastors to recovering men and woman. She spoke upstairs in the Caroline County Recovery Community Center.

"Tara turned down a \$1 million offer to pose for Playboy" magazine, said John Shinholser, president of The McShin Foundation, Virginia's leading non-profit, full-service recovery community organization.

Tara, now 27, was crowned Miss USA in 2006. During December of that year, she entered the Caron Treatment Center in Pennsylvania and completed 30 days of treatment for alcohol and drug addiction, said Tony Spencer, Caroline County's commonwealth's attorney. Spencer supports the Caroline recovery program because he would rather send non-violent criminals to recovery than jail, he said.

Tara will celebrate 7 years of sobriety next week. The group sat in a circle and Tara told her story and noted that all of her alcohol use was underage drinking. She took her first drink when she was 14 while on a cheerleading trip. "By the end of that year, I was hooked on morphine. It's God's wonder that I'm alive today. I got busted my freshman year.

"I thought it was normal to hang out with my friends and do drugs on the weekends."

But she got a new attitude toward life when she competed in beauty pageants and won her first pageant at 14. She was a featured model on the HDNet series "Bikini Fantasies" in 2004 as a teen-ager.

She was Miss Kentucky Teen USA 2002, Miss Kentucky USA 2006 and then Miss USA. Suddenly, "I was on the red carpet with celebrities and I had my own stylist and driver and I had a salary." She was on national TV news shows. That wasn't bad for a small town girl from Kentucky.

But living in New York City as Miss USA put her in with the wrong crowd and she got involved with guys, drugs and alcohol. "I had wanted to be famous and now I was famous but I was unhappy," she said.

She noted that she first



Photo by Eric Miller

Former Miss USA Tara Conner talks with Tony Spencer, the commonwealth's attorney for Caroline County. The model, actress and singer from Los Angeles stopped in Bowling Green on Dec. 3 to describe her recovery from years of drug and alcohol addiction. She spoke at the Caroline County Recovery Community Center.

had thoughts of suicide when she was 16, and those thoughts were back while in New York. "I wanted God to take me out."

In late 2006, she was in the national spotlight when news reports claimed she had been drinking underage and tested positive for cocaine use while living in Trump Place apartments in New York. Donald Trump held a press conference and said he was willing to give Tara a second chance. She was allowed to retain her title.

She "turned sober the week before turning 21," she said. "I've never had a legal drink." She went to Caron Treatment Center in Pennsylvania. "It was fascinating to be with a group of people who I could relate to and they could relate to me. I threw myself into the 12-step program. I did everything they said to do," she told recovering young men and women around her. They went around the circle and introduced themselves. One said he had been clean since 2006. Another started his recovery on Jan. 16, 2013 and another started Oct. 13, 2011.

"If not for being Miss USA, I wouldn't have been able to afford a treatment like that," Tara told the group. "Recovery is No. 1 in my life. But there have been ups and downs in life. Stuff happens, man. For three years, I was living out of my car. I was able to eat, and if I needed a place to stay, it was there. You can't save your face and your butt at the same time.

"But at least I know how to dream again. I know how to be a good daughter and a girlfriend. I never went without hope or faith."

During a question and answer session, local pastor David Upshaw asked Tara what is the best way to educate educators and others on seeing signs of drug and alcohol use to "catch it

early."

Tara noted that many parents don't believe their children could be using drugs or alcohol. "But by middle school, kids are introduced to drugs and alcohol," she said. "If I'd heard my story when I was 14, I would have had a little bit of hope."

Spencer noted that she had gotten on the road of recovery at an early age, and Tara said, "I was put in a great place for recovery."

When asked if she would consider having a movie made about her life, she said she wanted to first write her memoirs. When that is done, she might be open to a movie, she said.

When asked if she prays regularly, she said, "I feel like my God is on call all of

the time." She prays before she speaks and asks God to help her stay out of the way of the message he is getting out to people.

Through her work, she hopes to raise awareness that addiction is a disease and that many people go on to lead a healthy, productive life in recovery. She especially wants educators, families and professionals to know that sobriety at an early age is achievable and that it greatly enhances life's possibilities.

This week, she also visited the Henrico County Jail, the Rubicon (a men's treatment center in Richmond), Virginia State University and the Virginia War Memorial. She spoke at The McShin Foundation's annual holiday party/auction.

Hot air balloon fest, country music coming to event park

By Christina Lopes
Reporter

Jeff Dillon, president of the State Fair of Virginia, said Meadow Event Park will present a hot-air balloon festival in May and a Country music festival in June—events that could draw 10,000 people.

Dillon gave a presentation on upcoming happenings at the Meadow Event Park to the Caroline Board of Supervisors on Nov. 26.

"We have a very exciting 2014 plan," Dillon told the board. "It's good for us and it's good for the county."

Dillon said that January is already full of weekend events, and that February currently has two weekends booked. March is also mostly full, and April will bring many horse show events, according to Dillon.

In May, the Meadow Event Park will host a new event: The Mid-Atlantic Hot Air Balloon Festival. Dillon said that the Farm Bureau expects an estimated 10,000 people will attend this event, which means increased tax revenue for the county.

In June the K95 Radio sponsored Country Fest will come to the Meadow Event Park. Dillon said that another 10,000 people are estimated to attend this event.

The Tough Mudder extreme fitness course will be slotted for June as well. This popular event is predicted to bring in 7,000 to 8,000 people from all over the Mid-Atlantic area.



The rest of the summer months are also filling up quickly, said Dillon. September will bring the highly anticipated State Fair. Directly after the closing of the fair in October, a bluegrass festival will be coming to the park.

The Equine Extravaganza will happen in early November, followed by another new event: a drive-through holiday light show. Dillon said about 10,000 cars are predicted to drive through the show, which should average about 25,000 to 30,000 people.

"We expect a very busy year," Dillon said. Floyd Thomas, chairman of the Board of Supervisors, told Dillon that he and Farm Bureau had done "a great job" and that the county appreciates everything that they have done.

Dillon noted that the major concern during the heavily trafficked fair was parking. "We did run a little tight on parking," he said, adding that there had been a concern that the venue would run out of parking spaces.

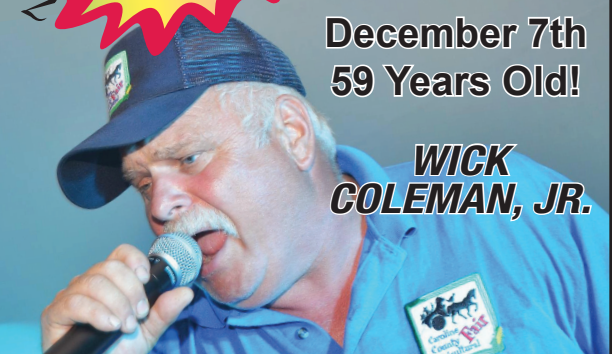
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