

Horse Center

Equine Association wants to bring facility to Bedford County

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The Bedford Equine Association's dream is to set up an equine and agricultural complex in Bedford County.

According to Shelby Sanderson, the Equine Association's president, and Richard Toms, a member of the association's board of directors, they would love to build the center at Falling Creek Park. Toms notes that this would place it in a central location with easy access. Sanderson notes that its proximity to Bedford means that people coming to events there from outside the county would have places nearby to eat and shop.

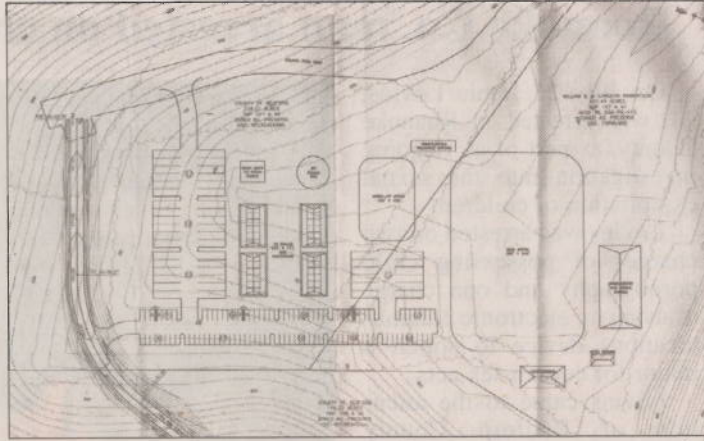
What they envision is not exclusively a horse center.

"We want it to be used for all agricultural purposes," Toms said.

Some of the uses the Equine Association envisions are large scale livestock shows, horse shows, cattle auctions, 4-H/FFA events, a farmers market and an agricultural education and training center.

It could also host a county fair. Bedford County has not had a county fair in decades, but Toms said that these are huge in other areas.

The Equine Association notes that, in addition to having the fifth largest horse



This is a tentative plan for the horse/agricultural center that the Bedford Equine Association hopes to build in Bedford County.

Center: Meeting planned on issue

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population in Virginia, Bedford County ranks sixth in the state in cattle and calves. It has Virginia's third largest population of beef cattle.

Along with serving local agriculture, the Equine Association believes that this center could bring people to the Bedford area's other attractions. Sanderson notes that people coming for horse events will be looking for other sites to see in the area and may want to check out the National D-Day Memorial or Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest.

The facility they envision would be a multimillion dollar endeavor. This means that it would be built in phases. The first phase would be the main arena so that it could begin generating revenue.

Right now all plans, even the site plan, are tentative.

"We are still gathering information and ideas," Toms said.

As part of that process, they've scheduled a roundtable discussion at the county administration building on Aug. 25. The discussion will be held in the ground floor training room at

7 p.m. and it's open to anybody who is interested in the project.

"We really want community feedback," said Sanderson.

They have also been meeting with the county's agricultural advisory board.

People can also e-mail ideas to them at mail@bedfordequine.org. Sanderson said that that e-mail address is checked several times a day.

One of their ideas is that at least a portion of the facility would honor the late Dr. William McCabe. McCabe was one of the three founding members of the Equine Association.

There is also the issue of paying for it all. Toms said that the organization hopes to raise the entire cost through grants and contributions, avoiding any debt. The Bedford Equine Association is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit and contributions are tax deductible. Anybody wishing to help can send contributions to Bedford Equine Association, P.O. Box 1470, Bedford, VA 24523.

For more information about the Bedford Equine Association, go to its Web site at www.bedfordequine.org.