

County enforces sign ordinance on motocross opponents

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KING WILLIAM – In the past few months, the new non-profit group opposing the proposed motocross facility has handed out over 300 yellow signs.

Donning the words “No Aylett Motocross 769-9089,” the two feet by three feet markers can be seen in yards and along roadways in much of the northern end of the county, voicing the opinion of the Citizens of King William County.

Now, that opinion may soon cost them.

Following several complaints to the planning department, Scott Lucchesi, Community Development Director, said the county may soon have to enforce its sign ordinance. Meaning, some of the citizens displaying the signs may be forced to purchase a permit or take it down.

“We’re not going around and pulling them up,” Lucchesi said. “Some people are complaining and we want to address those complaints.”

The sign ordinance is a part of the county’s Zoning Ordinance and requires both temporary and permanent permits for certain types of signage.

“A lot of this stuff is location specific, depending on where it’s going and what it’s doing,” Lucchesi said, urging citizens who have signs in their yards to check with the county to see if they need a permit.

“There’s 50 million of these things on your property during election time,” said Dr. Judith Gwathmey, a founder of the Citizens of King William County. “These are temporary signs; they’re not permanent. Is King William ready to say

that during elections no signs will be allowed?”

Lucchesi could not state whether or not election signs were exempt. At this time the planning department is still reviewing the ordinance.

“I’m trying to be as neutral as I can,” he said. “At the same time, we want people to be able to voice their opinions.”

The signs were developed in opposition of an application submitted late last year by developers Bob Fauteaux, Arthur Mourino, and Marshall Campbell to construct a motocross facility located on 327 acres in Aylett. And although the application submitted by KW Morrison LLC was withdrawn in order to be revamped and address concerns, the new citizens group has let most of the county know that they are holding their ground over the next few months as the application process continues.

Lucchesi said the number one complaint he is receiving is about the number of signs and mainly from those in support of motocross.

“We have tried to be an organized, respectful, civil type of group. We have had signs stolen, vandalized and our lives threatened,” Gwathmey said. “We are not trying to saturate the area. They have every right to put up signs as we do. This is a balanced county.”

Lucchesi said he has asked several residents in favor of the track not to put up signs. “I’m hoping it won’t become a sign battle with people for it and people against it,” he said.

For now, residents can visit the planning department to inquire about permits. Lucchesi said the ordinance designates a temporary sign fee of \$25, which allows a 30-day window, and a permanent sign fee of \$150 plus 50 cents per square feet.

Lucchesi said the county is working on a complaint driven system and will be sending letters to residents with signs in question and allowing them 30-days to contact the planning department before the sign will be removed.

Gwathmey, who said she will not be removing her signs, believes that it is a waste of manpower and money. "Is the county willing to spend that kind of money to impose on our civil rights?" she said.

The citizens group has spoken to the Virginia Department of Transportation and is following their requirements, according to group member Terry Stone.

"If these were going to be an issue, I wish we had been made aware of this in the beginning. A couple of months has passed with these signs up so the timing is odd," Stone said. "In my opinion, we've already made our point even if we have to take them down."

Developers are expected to submit a revised application in June before the Planning Commission. A public hearing on the matter could be held as early as July.