

OPINION

Save River Farm

Despite announcing in May of this year that they would begin formal negotiations with NOVA Parks and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) to sell River Farm, the American Horticultural Society (AHS) has done little to honor that agreement and instead made excuses and requested delays. Now four months later, during which time AHS continued to list River Farm as 'on the market', it appears that a developer has submitted a

letter of intent to purchase River Farm – along with several adjacent properties – to build a large-scale commercial business there.

Accepting such an offer would be a betrayal of the original intent of Enid Annenberg Haupt's financial gift that AHS used to purchase River Farm in 1973 and would cast aside their commitment to work with local government, parks organizations, and conservation groups to ensure the future of this unique community asset. No such offer from a developer to despoil River Farm can be allowed to move forward.

It is imperative that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors move expeditiously to pass the now twice-delayed Historic Overlay District addition to River Farm they first considered earlier this summer, and AHS must reaffirm that they are working exclusively with NOVA Parks and NVCT towards an agreement. Not only have NOVA Parks and NVCT had a fair market offer to purchase the property on the table for the last 9 months, they have consistently negotiated in good faith while proposing numerous options for AHS

to consider. Those options include co-ownership of property, renting the site back to AHS, and a full purchase.

The time is long past due for all sides to work together in earnest towards a solution that protects River Farm, and the residents of Northern Virginia expect nothing less than for this special place to be open to the public and safeguarded for all time.

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