

AHS board needs to listen

To the editor:

Recent articles in your newspaper regarding the American Horticultural Society's effort to sell the unique and historic River Farm should raise the alarm to everyone concerned about the loss of green space in our area. In this time of COVID-19, where all recognize the benefits of nature and spending time outdoors, it is especially shocking that AHS is looking for the highest bidder to take over, and likely develop, this 27-acre paradise.

It is directly contrary to the intentions of Enid Haupt, the philanthropist

who donated the funds which AHS used to acquire River Farm in 1973, as well as AHS' mission statement.

Questions have been raised about the propriety of the AHS Board's actions in initially justifying the sale, causing the board to cancel a proposed merger with a trade association and plead financial justifications. The resignation of the board chair and other directors as well as AHS' continuing refusal to respond to any inquiries about details of the listing are disturbing. Both the D.C. and Virginia attorney generals currently are investigating AHS actions

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in this area.

In January, AHS received an offer from the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and NOVA Parks to acquire the property but rejected it without a counter offer and extended the deadline in the hopes that more lucrative offers would flow in.

AHS will receive a windfall of

money to further its objectives if they accept the NCVT/NOVA offer while maintaining Haupt's intent to keep the land open to the public. When will the AHS Board listen and act consistent with their fiduciary responsibility?

*-Elizabeth H. Hayes,
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