



Lawsuit filed over golf course sale

Annapolis Roads residents seek to block sale to Key School

By ALLISON BOURG
Staff Writer

A group of Annapolis Roads residents has once again filed a lawsuit to prevent the Annapolis Golf Course from being turned into an athletic complex.

In the lawsuit filed Wednesday in Anne Arundel County Circuit Court, members of the Preserve Annapolis Roads group argue the Key School's plans for the course violate land-use covenants.

Key School officials announced two weeks ago that the school

would buy the 70-acre course and use it for athletic fields and outdoor education.

Such uses are prohibited, plaintiffs' attorney Thomas A. Deming wrote in the lawsuit.

The Key School's plans "would create a material change in the physical condition of the golf course," the suit states. Adding ball fields and outdoor classrooms would increase noise and traffic, and forever change the character of the Annapolis Roads community, Deming wrote.

Plaintiffs Pamela and Chester C. Buckenmaier III and Patricia and Gregory Strott, representing Preserve Annapolis Roads, sued the Key School along with golf course developers Ribera Development

LLC and course owners George and Linda Graefe.

Linda Graefe declined to comment on the lawsuit this morning. George Graefe said earlier this month the details of the sale were being finalized.

Wes Jones, president of the Key School's board of trustees, was not available for comment this morning.

But he said after the sale was announced that he saw it as mutually beneficial to the school and the neighborhood.

"It seemed like a good fit for us," Jones said.

Jones said he and other Key School officials planned to meet

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with Annapolis Roads residents to talk in detail about the school's plans. He said the school had "no plans whatsoever" to build any school buildings on course land.

But almost immediately, a group of residents began to fight back. Many Annapolis Roads residents have put out Preserve Annapolis Roads signs in their yards to protest the sale.

In a letter sent to Jones on Monday, Annapolis Roads resident Christopher Rizzo lambasted the Key School for not being more open with the

community.

"I am appalled that this has been such a secretive transaction that will impact not only my family, but over 300 other families in our treasured community," Rizzo wrote.

The debate over the golf course goes all the way back to the 1970s, when the then-owners of the course sued the Annapolis Roads Property Owners Association over their rights to develop the land. Thirteen years later, the golf course and association came to an agreement that restricted land use. The agreement permitted a golf course, along with nurseries and conservation uses.

But controversy over the sale of the golf club has been

brewing over the past half-dozen years.

In 2005, St. Mary's High School had plans to develop the course into ball fields and other athletic facilities, with up to 40 homes built on an adjacent parcel. But residents protested and raised \$2.75 million to buy that 33-acre parcel.

St. Mary's backed out of the deal and a development company eventually sued the Annapolis Roads property owners. A Circuit Court judge later sided with the community.

That verdict, Rizzo said, established certain land-use covenants, which don't include ball fields or classrooms.

"There are only eight per-

mitted uses for the 70-acre golf course," Rizzo wrote. "Our community will vigorously pursue the enforcement of these covenants."

Deming said this morning that residents were taken aback by news of the sale.

"There were discussions over the summer that the

Key School was possibly interested," Deming said.

But residents got little information beyond that, he said.

"To that extent, they were taken by surprise," Deming said.

abourg@capgaznews.com