

9/13-14/89

Dumfries says

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Dumfries officials are hoping to harness burgeoning growth in the town to reverse its long-held reputation as one of the county's backwater jurisdictions.

The growth could usher in a new era for the town, which some residents feel has been used as a dumping ground for un-

wanted Prince William projects.

Because past town councils have done little to protect its interests, Dumfries has been saddled with a number of unpopular county projects, such as the Potomac Landfill, said Mayor Robert McClanahan.

Most recently, town council members were taken aback when they discovered the county is considering a 30-bed home-

'Don't pick on us'

■ Town resists shelter/A26

less shelter there, and that the Virginia Power Company was stringing a massive, 500-kilovolt power transmission line through the town.

Dumfries officials are concerned that the shelter will bring drug users and the men-

tally ill into the town.

And they worry about possible health effects of the electromagnetic field generated by the power line.

Recent studies have not confirmed suspected links between the powerful electromagnetic fields and cancer and Leukemia. But the 500-kilovolt field is so strong it will disrupt electronic equipment and will even

light up unconnected fluorescent bulbs nearby, according to Khazar Westi of the state health department's toxic substances bureau.

Town officials did not oppose the power line, which will lie across 100-foot towers on Route 1, when Virginia Power told them about plans for it during the early 1980.

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Mistakes of past come

DUMFRIES from A1

They have no way to resist it now, McClanahan said.

In addition, past town officials failed to get desperately needed state funding for roads and water and sewer projects here.

"We lacked the desire" to get state funding, said former council member Samuel Bauckman. Many of the town's problems came "through lack of knowledge and inability to deal with what was going on in Richmond," he said.

"Time was we had a sleepy little town," said one Dumfries official. Now, "we need to take care of it, in the right way."

I just don't think the concern was

here," said Mayor McClanahan. "It's like they figured they'd wake up the next morning and the town still be here."

"But now the world's changing," he said. "We're an urban community."

"Nobody's ever stood up to actually ask questions," McClanahan said, referring to the power line. "Now, we ask questions."

During the last 4-5 years, the development that has transformed the eastern part of Prince William County has filtered down to Dumfries, the oldest incorporated town in Virginia.

Last month, the council hired James Crouch to be the first town manager in its history, responding to the administrative burden of a flood of commercial and residential

growth in recent years.

And none too soon, some officials believe. During the last several years, the small staff has had trouble keeping pace with growing administrative needs, they said.

Crouch will manage a town whose budget has ballooned from \$243,399 in 1980 to \$784,779 in 1989. During the same period, the town's staff has grown from seven employees to 19.

The changes have brought new headaches and new responsibilities. But Brown said he believes it will also bring the money to deal with the problems.

THE PRINCE WILLIAM JOURNAL/POTOMAC WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY/September 13-14, 1989 A27

back to haunt Dumfries

The town has issued 345 building permits so far this year, compared to 360 in all of last year, and 156 in all of 1982, Crouch said.

Because of the growth, the town was sometimes unable to enforce its own zoning ordinances. "We just didn't have the manpower to follow up" on some of the violations, said Grant Angel, the town building and zoning officer.

Dumfries will have to spend more to police some of its streets. The town is facing a growing drug problem, with dealers peddling marijuana and cocaine regularly in Williamstown, only a mile from town

hall.

During the last fiscal year, Dumfries officers arrested four times as many people as the year before because of the expanding market for crack, marijuana and PCP (an hallucinogen), said Acting Police Chief Calvin L. Johnson.

In addition, the drug trade is probably responsible for a threefold increase in the number of robberies there, Johnson said.

Twenty years ago, Dumfries had one police officer. Today the department needs every one of the ten officers in its budget to cover the

town.

Dumfries' population is projected to swell from about 3,500 in 1980 to almost 5,500 by 1990, Angel said. The growth will dramatically increase Dumfries' share of state revenues and widen its tax base, said Brown.

It was the town's beefed-up budget that enabled the council to hire Croucher. In recent years, it delayed hiring a town manager because it did not have the money, Brown said.

"Now we can afford to do some things," he said.