



Kelly Horst, left, of the National Sojourners Chapter 364, and county board Chairman Edwin C. King took part in Dumfries' 240th anniversary celebration.

BY JOHN McDONNELL—THE WASHINGTON POST

'The Sleeping Giant Is Finally Awake'

Dumfries Is Growing—for Better or Worse

By Claudia Sandlin
Washington Post Staff Writer

Speakers praised the beautiful sunny day and hummed on about the history of Dumfries last Sunday at the town's 240th anniversary celebration at Merchant Park, but few references were made to town leaders' underlying concerns about the Dumfries of today and the future.

Once a rival port of New York City, Dumfries suffered a near-fatal blow in the mid-18th century when runoff from the nearby tobacco fields silted in Quantico Creek and shut down the port.

Today, the little town—which survived mainly on the strength of the farms and nearby Quantico Marine Base after it arrived in 1917—is trying to catch up with a recent surge in population while planning for an expected burst of development.

Earlier this month, the Town Council approved a new 4 percent tax on restaurant meals and a 4 percent tax on hotel and motel room charges, intended to bring in

\$200,000 more in revenue for the financially strapped town.

There is other evidence of Dumfries' coming of age, and all the good and bad that goes with it: The council is hiring its first town manager, the state is turning over to the town responsibility for its own roads, and the small police department is grappling with a dramatic increase in drug-related crimes, town officials say.

"The sleeping giant is finally awake . . . We are becoming completely urbanized," Dumfries Mayor Robert McClanahan said in an interview. But many town residents "don't really realize what's going on in this town . . . except when [the problems] hit them on their own doorsteps."

Though he is paid as a part-time mayor, McClanahan said his duties have expanded into a full-time job, and many of those responsibilities will be turned over to the new town manager.

Several Saturdays ago, the Dumfries Police Department conducted the largest drug raid in the town's history, in which 17 people were ar-

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rested on cocaine and marijuana charges in a trailer house in the Grayson Village Mobile Home courtyard in the northwest section of the town.

The raid increased this year's statistics for drug-related arrests by 90 percent over the first four months of 1988, according to Police Chief Harvey Anderson.

"We're having crack houses, and we never had anything like that before," said Anderson, adding that the nine-officer department is hard pressed to meet the demands of the growing town.

Town officials expect the next census to show an increase in the Dumfries population from 4,000 in 1980 to about 7,000 in 1990. This growth has strained town services, especially since the state said that the town will have to take over the building and maintenance of its own roads as of next year because Dumfries' population now is well above a maximum for towns entitled to state funding.

"The problems that the county faces, Dumfries faces also," explained Edwin C. King, chairman of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors, who represents the Dumfries district.

Pointing to the town's zoning of a historic district and new emphasis on a colonial theme for all new developments, King said he is confident that the Town Council has done what it can with its limited funding to plan for the anticipated development.

"Dumfries is now transcending from a quiet little place to a very busy little place," said council member Christopher K. Brown, a lifelong resident who has an accounting firm in the town. He noted that population increases generally also mean a rise in crime.

Nonetheless, the Town Council, stressing the need for fiscal restraint, has indicated it cannot approve the police department budget request this year for two additional officers, a new paid-informant program and equipment for an entry SWAT team to make the initial break-in during raids. The council will give final approval to a town budget in June.

Town officials also emphasize the need for town-county cooperation, particularly because Dumfries residents pay county taxes and receive many county services, including schools and water and sewage treatment.

When a Dumfries police officer recently alleged that the county police refused to assist in the recent drug raid, it raised questions about the working relationship between the town and county, but the mayor and several council members dismissed the allegation.

"I can tell you emphatically . . . that Prince William County has always been there to do a good job. We are not treated as an island in the county," said council member Brown.

According to town officials, there will probably be massive commercial development in several years along the Rte. 1 corridor on the northern end of town, particularly if Prince William County approves the proposed Southbridge project, an extensive commercial and residential development, for Cherry Hill, north of Dumfries.

The Southbridge developer, the Aden Group, also plans to build a small commercial development on several acres in southeast Dumfries, which would substantially expand the town's office space, according to Zoning Administrator Grant Angel.

One sore point in discussions of Dumfries' future is the fate of five mobile home and trailer house parks, which cover about 4 percent of the town's total acreage but constitute about 21 percent of the housing units in the town. Residents fear that some of that land will be turned over to developers to build commercial projects or more permanent housing and that they will be displaced.

Three of the trailer house parks are in the commercial heart of Dumfries off Main Street and Rte. 1. And Grayson Village Mobile Home park—the largest park, with 153 units—has commercially zoned property on its southern and eastern boundaries.

Some town officials have not answered questions about the future of the trailer house and mobile home parks. McClanahan, when pressed about their possible redevelopment, said, "Anything is possible."

While growth will bring with it some discomforts, it won't surprise Dumfries "as suddenly as it would have maybe four years ago," council member Betty Mejia-Farley said at last Sunday's anniversary celebration.

The town should strive to maintain a "small look, but not a [small] attitude," she said. "We're a town of people who all know each other. I wouldn't call it 'Smalltown, U.S.A.'"