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Caroline cannery gets a reprieve

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BY PORTSIA SMITH

An escrow account holding nearly \$18,000 will help keep the Caroline County cannery open for at least one more year.

The Caroline Board of Supervisors voted last week to keep the cannery open after learning about the money and a possible partnership.

Supervisors Maxie Rozell and Bobby Popowicz said regional officials who serve on the George Washington Regional Commission may be interested in turning the cannery into a regional operation. That would encourage residents outside of Caroline to also use the cannery, which provides space and equipment for residents to can their own fruits and vegetables.

"The whole group was excited about bringing a green idea to the region," Rozell said at the meeting. "And they feel strongly that there may be grants not only to maintain, but grow our cannery operation."

Other elected officials had told Rozell that some Stafford County residents were traveling to Maryland to do canning, possibly because they didn't know the one in Caroline was there.

The board had voted earlier to close the cannery because it had lost money over the years.

County Administrator Percy Ashcraft recommended the closure after financial reports showed the cannery was losing about \$14,000 a year and the number of annual customers had dwindled to 38.

Only \$458 in revenue has been generated in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 combined.

"Clearly, the operation is not paying for itself," he said.

However, Ashcraft reported that an escrow account being held at Union Bank and Trust with \$17,969 was now available to be used for the operations of the cannery. This account was created by former cannery operator Lloyd Boxley, and remained there upon his passing in 2005.

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