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## Zoning change coming for Bainbridge

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PORT DEPOSIT — A public hearing will be held Wednesday night by the planning commission to discuss a proposed change in the zoning designation for the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center property.

Port Deposit is making the move to assign the B&I zone to the 1,200-acre former military base, moving away from the BX designation.

The planning commission will send its recommendations to the mayor and council, who will hold its own hearing Feb. 18 at the Carriage House and then cast its vote on the changes.

Vicky Rinkerman, town administrator, said the BX zone was for a mixed-use development.

“We had to re-write the comprehensive plan and do zoning ordinances to allow industry and commercial only,” Rinkerman said. “This was driven by the agreement with the Bainbridge Development Corporation and the Navy through Maryland Department of the Environment.”

That agreement came about from a drawn out clean up project by the Navy after which it was decided that there could be no residential development there because of lingering asbestos contamination. There could, however, be commercial and industrial growth. With an announcement promised for a long-awaited development there. Port Deposit has been busy getting ready for all that will entail including having the proper zoning in place.

“We had to gear initial changes specifically for preliminary plans from developers,” Rinkerman said. Cecil County has seen a boom in warehouse and distribution centers of late. Rinkerman hinted that the change would reflect that trend.

Town and county officials have been tight-lipped about the identity of the first developer at Bainbridge. Site preparation on the 400-acre portion of the property for this targeted development has already begun according to Toni Sprenkle, project manager for the Bainbridge Development Corporation.

“A contractor has been out there since December with a surface scanner,” Sprenkle said of the efforts to remove even more contamination. “Transite (asbestos wallboard) panels, pipe and flooring is being bagged up and removed.”

“We can’t break ground until they finish the scan,” she said.

Breaking ground will signal the start of construction of a 1.8 million square foot structure known as “Building A.”

“It’s a very large building for a very big investor,” Sprenkle said. “(But) I can truthfully say I have no idea who it is.”

Port Deposit annexed Bainbridge into its borders in 1999. The Navy had stopped using the property more than 25 years before. Over the decades since there have been failed starts for such development as a NASCAR facility, amusement park, and refugee center. It was once home to a Job Corps Center and Cecil College uses a portion now for its truck driver training.