

The Capital

Top Stories

'Sprawl Queen' replica sells for \$305 on eBay

By E.B. FURGURSON III Staff Writer

For a mere \$305, an Edgewater woman has bought our county executive, or at least an outlandish replica thereof.

Brenda DeLalla, a longtime environmental activist and sometimes-thorn in the side of County Executive Janet S. Owens, had the top bid in an eBay auction for a 12-foot-tall likeness of Ms. Owens, dubbed the "Queen of Sprawl."

"I did not want to see someone buy it who would destroy it," said Mrs. DeLalla, explaining why she and her husband Ralph decided to buy it. "It occurred to us this was an important piece of south county history very much worth preserving."

The effigy, wearing a sash and crown, caused quite a stir when it made three appearances in south county in 2000 during the debate over Safeway's later-abandoned plans to build a store and shopping center in Deale.

South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development had the puppet made by activist-artist Nadine Bloch, who has made puppets for scores of demonstrations around the country, and used it in opposition to the Safeway plan.

The puppet was put up on the auction site Dec. 7 with bids starting at \$250. The auction ended Saturday, and Mrs. DeLalla's winning bid was announced at SACReD's Christmas party that evening. The organization will use the proceeds for its operations. The auction page had more than 100 hits but only a dozen bids during the auction.

"The puppet will be preserved as a memory of our effort to preserve south county," Mrs. DeLalla said, lamenting all the dump trucks she sees up and down local roads. "There is construction all over the place."

The body of the puppet is merely a wooden frame draped in light fabric.

The papier-mache head has strips of foam rubber fashioned to suggest Ms. Owens' trademark coiffure, topped with a golden crown emblazoned "Queen of Sprawl."

Ms. Owens and her inner circle did not take kindly to the portrayal when it first appeared nor when news of the eBay auction appeared.

"I find it appalling and disgusting," Ms. Owens said this month.

Mrs. DeLalla is also thinking about hanging the puppet in a corner of her house, where one room has 19-foot ceilings.



Puppet of Janet Owens was used to fight development in south county.
By J. Henson -- The Capital; file

"It will make a great conversation piece," she said, laughing. "But that will have to wait until after Christmas."

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