

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION

Virtual Meeting conducted via ZOOM
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, March 2, 2021
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Mark Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., via a virtual meeting with ZOOM due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Present included Commissioner Raymond Mitchell and members Michael Nair and Judy Duffy. Also present were Melissa Cook-Mackenzie, Town Administrator, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Zoning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant.

-MINUTES-

February 2, 2021

Commissioner Mitchell made a motion to approve the February 2, 2021 Planning Commission minutes, as presented. Mr. Nair seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-OLD BUSINESS-

None.

-NEW BUSINESS-

GUEST: Ridgely Forest Development Owner and Developer: WOLF, LLC, 2301 Rutledge Road, Fallston, Maryland 21047 Tax Map 31; Parcel 1355. Zoning District R-4. Forestation.

Chairman Dobbins reported that the Planning Commission was forwarded a copy of a Stop Work Order issued by Cecil County to WOLF, LLC in regards to clearing being done in Section 5A and the Planning Commission would like the developer to clarify the circumstances that initiated the Stop Work Order.

Jim Wolf, developer, WOLF, LLC reported that throughout the Ridgely Forest Development project, they have been working under a Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan. A separate Grading Permit is obtained for each individual section. Mr. Wolf explained that at the beginning stages of each section it is impossible to know the exact layout and this layout gets modified throughout the development of that section which is reflected in the Final Forest Conservation Plan. For instance, a 30 acre section may have a .2 acres difference from the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan to the Final Forest Conservation Plan. The controlling document that provides permission for clearing land is the Grading Plan. Mr. Wolf reported that in regards to Section 5A, the approved grading plan actually projected four tenths of an acre less clearing than was on the Preliminary Forestation Plan. Therefore, the clearing began on Section 5A under the Grading Permit and then a Stop Work Order was issued. The Final Forestation Plan for Section 5A needed to be approved because they had reached beyond their break-even point on the re-

APPROVED
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forestation requirement. Mr. Wolf reported that he had spoken to Mr. Matthew Littlejohn, Cecil Count, who stated that the Final Forestation Plan should have been approved prior to the Grading Plan approval for Section 5A, however, there seemed to be some confusion and the Grading Plan was approved first in error. Therefore, until such time that the Final Forestation Plan is approved, the developer was permitted to continue to clear the trees that had already been cut down. Mr. Wolf reported that the Final Forestation Plan includes onsite re-forestation as well as off-site re-forestation. The required easement agreements and landscape agreement have been signed and forwarded to Cecil County Land Records for recordation. Mr. Wolf reported that Mr. Littlejohn stated that work could begin again in Section 5A. The off-Site Landscape Agreement with Cecil County had not yet been recorded and therefore the work in Section 5A was stopped again. The Off-Site Landscape Agreement has since been submitted to Cecil County Land Records for recordation

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie inquired about the delay in getting the documents recorded. Mr. Wolf replied that an off-site forestation banking easement agreement had been inadvertently forwarded to the Town of North East for signature and processing, however this was not necessary and the documents were picked up from the Town and delivered to Cecil County for recordation.

Mr. Nair stated that since the beginning of the Ridgely Forest development project, there have been several request and concessions granted by the Planning Commission up to this point. Mr. Nair stated that it seems as if the developers are consistently requesting for changes on plans that have already received approval from the Planning Commission. Mr. Wolf replied that Ridgely Forest is a Master Planned Community with different types of housing units and they have had to make changes to approved plans along the way. Mr. Nair responded that he does not concur.

Mr. Nair inquired about the re-forestation of Section 5A. Mr. Wolf stated that re-forestation is currently taking place throughout the development with the installation of 2,000 one inch caliber trees. Mr. Wolf added that any re-forestation that would take place in Section 5A will most likely not occur until after the homes have been built in that section. The cleared area is not necessarily where the re-planting will occur within the development. Mr. Wolf reported that all planting except for Section 5B will be installed this spring, 2021.

Mrs. Vennell inquired if there were additional tree plantings required due to the clearing which took place out of sequence in Section 5A. Mr. Wolf responded, no, as there was actually four tenths of an acre less clearing required than on the approved Grading Plan. The Final Forest Conservation Plan had to be updated to match the approved Grading Plan.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie confirmed that all of the trees removed were part of the approved plan and there were no additional trees removed outside of that plan. Mr. Wolf replied that is correct.

Mr. Wolf reported that the Duplex-Villas are beginning to constructed, the Clubhouse construction is going well and on schedule, the Tot-lot has been ordered and the pavilion has been ordered.

Mrs. Vennell inquired how much the Duplex –Villas are beginning in price. Mr. Wolf replied well over \$260,000.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

None.

-REPORTS-

Library

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that Thursday, March 4, 2021 the Town Board will be attending a private tour of the new Library and they are looking to have a dedication in April 2021.

Jackson House

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that Cecil County Tourism has moved into the Jackson House.

North East Gateway

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that there may be a new tenant for the North East Gateway project.

CNA/EnEngineering

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that CNA has been acquired by and is now known as EnEngineering. In addition, EnEngineering has hired two new staff members who may be working with Chris Mink on in and out of Town projects.

Mayor and Commissioners

Mayor Robert McKnight's last day is March 10, 2021. There are also two Commissioner seats which are in the process of being filled.

SHA Project

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the SHA project north of Route 40 has continued and hopefully, she will be given an updated at the upcoming SHA meeting. The Planning Commission concurred that the area looks much better than it has in past months.

Mrs. Duffy inquired about the homeless encampment within the SHA property at the corner of Route 40 and Route 272. Mrs. Duffy stated that she and another town resident were concerned about the location of this encampment in relation to the new library. Chairman Dobbins stated that this topic was discussed with the representative of the library during one of the Planning Commission meetings. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that the Town police are aware of this encampment and there are procedures in place on how to handle these situations. Typically, a letter is obtained from the property owner stating that they are not permitted to be on the property and the Town hands out a packet of information on services available to them.

-COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC-

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
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None.

-NEXT MEETING-

The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 P.M. Mr. Nair seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully submitted:

Attest:

Lisa Rhoades
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins
Chairman

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