

**Town of Smithfield
Planning Board Minutes
Thursday, November 2nd, 2023
Town Hall Council Chambers
6:00 PM**

Members Present:

Chairman Mark Lane
Vice-Chairman Debbie Howard
Bryan Stanley
Alisa Bizzell
Doris Wallace
Wiley Narron

Members Absent:

Ashley Spain

Staff Present:

Stephen Wensman, Planning Director
Michael Scott, Town Manager

Staff Absent:

Julie Edmonds, Administrative Support Specialist

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Debbie Howard made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Doris Wallace. Unanimously approved

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for September 7th, 2023

Doris Wallace made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Bryan Stanley. Unanimously approved.

Chairman Mark Lane addressed everyone in attendance and explained the roll of the Planning Board and the format of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

CZ-23-01 Buffalo Road: The applicant is requesting to rezone a 138.63-acre tract of land from the R-20A, R-10 and R-8 Residential zoning districts to the R-8 Conditional Zoning district with a master plan consisting of 217 single-family residential lots. The property considered for rezoning is located on the east side of Buffalo Road, approximately 300 south of its intersection with Holland Drive and further identified as Johnston County Tax ID# 14A03005.

Stephen Wensman stated Adams and Hodge Engineering, PC, is requesting a conditional rezoning of 138.63-acres of land from R-8 and R-20A to R8-CZ with a master plan for a planned development consisting of 217 single family lots. Mr. Wensman explained that a previous neighborhood meeting was held with the developer. A summary of concerns was brought up by the Bradford Park residents and was given to the board. They are located on page 3 of the agenda packet.

Stephen Wensman stated an additional condition of approval should be added such that the developer must provide access to a land locked lot owned by the Worley Family, parcel number 14K09007. He went on to say that Buffalo Rd was a state maintained/owned road and that an NCDOT permit will be required for all proposed/required access and traffic improvements.

Mr. Wensman explained the new development needs to connect to Parkway Drive in the Bradford Park neighborhood to meet the UDO and fire code and the development would also need to provide access to a 25-acre parcel to the South to accommodate future development as per UDO requirements. He also explained that sidewalks are proposed for both sides of the streets within the development. The proposed cul-de-sac bulbs are shown as having a 40-foot radius when a 48 ft radius was required by the fire code and one is longer than allowed by the UDO.

Mr. Wensman further explained the road coming from Bradford Park will transition from the existing 38-foot width to the proposed 31-foot width. Staff also recommends round-a-bouts at each three-way intersection as a traffic calming measure, whereas the developer proposes three way stops using stop signs at intersections.

Mr. Wensman explained the proposed lot sizes are 4300 sq. ft. Staff had requested larger lots where the new development meets Bradford Park to transition to smaller homes. This recommendation is not reflected in the current plans.

Mr. Wensman stated an HOA will be responsible for the common areas and storm ponds, of which there were two, mail kiosks and parking lots. Each lot will be designed with the ability to park 3-vehicles with overflow parking for an additional 98 vehicles on street in parking bays and in HOA parking lots. He went on to say that sewer access wouldn't be available until Spring 2025, the timeline for opening the new county sewer plant.

Mr. Wensman provided the Board with a consistency statement and 11 conditions of approval as provided on pages 8 and 9 of the agenda. Number 11 is the access requirement for parcel 14K09007, the Worley lot.

Mark Lane inquired if the density of the proposed subdivision was smaller than other developments that had already been approved.

Mr. Wensman explained the lots at the East River Subdivision were smaller. Mark Lane also brought up a concern about the length of the cul-de-sacs.

Debbie Howard inquired if Staff's recommended curbing on Buffalo Rd could be replaced with a valley curb to improve storm drainage. Mr. Wensman explained that NCDOT would make that determination.

At 6:40 Donnie Adams of Adams and Hodge began addressing the Board.

Adams explained the entire development was slightly less than 140 acres. Adams implied there was a 30-acre parcel behind the development that could have been developed for additional residential properties, increasing the overall density of this project.

Adams addressed the cul-de-sac radius explaining that the fire marshal had indicated the 40 ft. radius was adequate for the shorter cul-de-sac. Adams indicated the fire marshal felt the parking lot could be used to turn around a fire engine for the longer street with the second cul-de-sac, making the 40-foot radius adequate at that location as well.

Adams explained he understood about the issue of providing access to the Worley lot as a condition and he did not have a problem providing that.

Adams discussed the stub out road and opposed that condition as people are generally opposed to connecting to that in the future.

Adams said he would be glad to provide written architectural standards to accompany the pictures and information already provided.

Adams explained that Buffalo Road was a state road and all decisions, including adding curb and gutter should be left in the hands of NCDOT.

Adams addressed the traffic calming features of the staff recommended roundabouts, but felt that the three-way stops were sufficient to slow traffic.

Adams discussed the connection to Bradford Park saying that he did not oppose, not connecting to Bradford Park but that was Town required. Adams discussed the open space at that location and the greenway trail and felt that transition met the current code.

Mark Lane clarified with Adams, that Adams did not agree with all the conditions of approval.

Bryan Stanley asked what the density would be if the wetlands were not considered as part of the equation. Adams stated he did not know but ball parking it, he felt about 15% of the site were wetlands. Stanley further asked for the depth of each house. Adams stated they were a 30 ft. by 60 ft. box. Stanley asked if the storm water ponds were wet or dry. Adams stated they were wet ponds. Stanley also asked if masonry could be added to the fronts of the houses.

Debbie Howard asked that some stone or brick accent the front of the homes, but not cover the entire front of each house.

Mark Lane asked the Planning Director how the Board could address lot sizes.

Mr. Wensman stated the Board could reject the plan then make recommendations to the Council and explain what is too small. He further explained that this was predominately an R-8 zoning district prior to rezoning, so 8000 sq. ft. lots were to be the starting point. From there, the conditional zoning process was to be a give and take culminating in a negotiated plan.

At 7:05 Adams ended his time in front of the board and the citizens who desired to speak were provided an opportunity.

Rick Buckner of Bradford Park addressed the Board. Buckner explained that all the neighbors in Bradford Park looked out for one another. If 300 houses were added they could no longer do that. Buckner explained traffic concerns and the impact of traffic on other matters like kids walking to school was a concern. Buckner also felt that the small lot sizes would decrease his property value and felt that NCDOT would approve the subdivision. Buckner voiced concerns with either the three way stop signs or the roundabouts because he felt either option would create additional vehicle noise. He also felt the subdivision would increase traffic everywhere and would compound school staffing issues. Buckner felt the board should not vote on an incomplete plan.

Scott Gandolf of Bradford Park addressed the Board. Gandolf questioned the fire department requirement since Eden Woods and East River only had two access points. He reiterated that the required tie in was the biggest issue for Bradford Park residents. He questioned the wisdom of adding 400 cars onto Buffalo Road and felt if a tie in had to occur it would be better to tie into Canterbury Road and access Highway 301 rather than Buffalo Rd.

Gandolf expressed concerns of storm water drainage stating that residents often have standing water in their back yards. He felt nothing stated in the staff recommendations addressed the concerns of the residents of Bradford Park and explained that the residents bought into a subdivision with R-10 lots in order to keep the subdivision small.

Karen Grubbs of Bradford Park addressed the Board. Her issues were listed as traffic, drainage and the fact she had lived in Bradford Park for 25 years. She assumed the subdivision would remain small. She explained her lot was over ½ acre in size and the lots in the new subdivision were only 1/10 of an acre. She stated she had 30 years invested in her house.

Gene Bruten of Cobblestone Drive addressed the Board. His concerns included drainage and the potential decrease in his home's value. He felt if homes needed to be built, they should be comparable in size to those in Bradford Park. He felt new residents with a lower income than the residents of Bradford Park would bring problems. He also felt the additional cars may harm pedestrians and children in the area. He reiterated that he asked the lot sizes be increased and the connection to Bradford Park be eliminated.

Larry Hunnicut of Cobblestone Court addressed the Board. He asked if the ditch behind his property would be improved. Wensman stated that the storm drainage had not been engineered yet. Hunnicut voiced concerns about lot size and the potential for the subdivision to turn into a slum area. He asked that cars not be allowed to go through their subdivision.

Vinnie Lupo of Cobblestone Court addressed the Board. He voiced complaints about the East River Subdivision and the lot size of the proposed subdivision.

Steven Hart of a home near the subdivision addressed the Board. He stated his backyard is wet and he was concerned about storm drainage.

Wendy Lupo of Cobblestone Court addressed the Board. She stated she was part of a nice neighborhood. She was concerned about the lot size and the proposed tie into Bradford Park. She also had traffic concerns and how the development would negatively impact problems with already overcrowded schools.

Rick Buckner of Bradford Park addressed the Board for a second time. He introduced an article on ABC 11 news that described Smithfield as a gradual growth town. He stated this type of development would take away from that designation. He further explained that Smithfield did not want to be Clayton.

Glenn Weeks spoke for the developer then addressed the Board. Weeks explained in 2008 he began building houses and built out Bella Square when no one would build houses in Smithfield. He discussed the housing market and the demand for products like were built in Bella Square and believed that the properties in Bradford Park would increase in value because this subdivision would increase the cost of homes per square foot in the area. Weeks further stated he would prefer to eliminate the tie into Bradford Park and if so, would eliminate the homes north of the small cul-de-sac.

Mark Lane asked if there were other connections to the new development that might work. Week's felt the radio tower property would be an alternative but stated the developer did not own that property.

Debbie Howard asked if the stub out was part of the existing plan for future development and if future development would need to tie into that stub out. Wensman explained that it was. Howard then asked if the stub out that exists in Bradford Park was created for a future development tie in? Wensman stated that it was.

Glenn Weeks then asked if the trail system might be improved to create an emergency entrance for a fire engine. Mr. Wensman said the fire chief did not want emergency entrances and exits or knock down gates. Mr. Wensman then explained to the Board this was not the venue for developing new plans to the existing proposal.

Debbie Howard asked if the request could be tabled until the December meeting. Weeks and Adams expressed approval for the request to be tabled and perhaps further evaluate the tie into Bradford Park and what alternatives might exist.

Doris Wallace made a motion to table the request until the December 7th meeting. Seconded by Debbie Howard. All present were in favor, no one opposed.

Old Business: None

Adjournment

Alisa Bizzell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Debbie Howard. Unanimous for adjournment. Time 8:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Edmonds

Julie Edmonds
Administrative Support Specialist