

**TOWN OF SOMERS
PLANNING COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 308
SOMERS, CONNECTICUT 06071**

**PLANNING MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, January 26, 2006
7:00 p.m. Town Hall**

I. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Special Use Permit Application for Age Restricted Housing, Shaker Road, Gingras Development, LLC

Chairman Karl Walton opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. Town Planner Patrice Carson read the legal notice.

Landscape Architect, Aris Stalis, from BSC Group spoke on behalf of the applicant. He explained that they have consulted quite a bit with the Town and revised plans were submitted today. Mr. Stalis described the proposed age-restricted housing development composed of 80 units and situated on a 45-acre parcel adjacent to Shaker Road. The applicant anticipates utilizing 23 acres for the project, with 388 feet of frontage.

Each unit will have a 2-car garage and 2 additional parking spaces in the driveway. The units are designed to be approximately 2,000 to 3,000 square-feet in size. The outer materials proposed will include vinyl siding in earth tones with various stone or brick accents as selected by unit owners.

The total pavement coverage will be 4.2 acres, which is under 9%. A 24-foot wide roadway will encircle the site and be accompanied by a sidewalk along one side, and enter the site from Shaker Road. A second entrance for emergency vehicle access will be located behind Joanna's Café and will remain locked to the public. A walking trail through the woods is proposed, which will be field-located to minimize area disturbance.

Potential drainage runoff will be collected with pipes and under drains along the roadways and two detention basins. The basins are to be planted with native seedlings and the 80-foot buffer has been designed to re-vegetate and readily re-seed.

A sewage pump station will be required to serve a portion of the units and will be housed within a

small, covered storage building, which will be landscaped and have its own parking space.

A central green with a gazebo is proposed. If the Owners' Association decides to landscape the area with gardens and/or various plantings, they may do so, as this common area is meant to be for the benefit of all the residents.

Lighting has been designed for minimal impact on the environment. Each unit would have a 6-foot light pole, controlled centrally by the Association.

The Town Planner is in receipt of a letter dated January 25, 2006 from the BSC Group in which 9 items and comments arising from the last meeting are successfully addressed. Town Sanitarian Steve Jacobs received a letter from Gingras Development regarding revisions to the proposed units required to meet the size regulations, and he approves of the proposed changes.

Mrs. Carson commented that the BSC Group had not added a second parking space at the pump station as required by the WPCA. Mr. Stalis understood the request to be a suggestion only and, therefore had not complied with the request. Mrs. Carson explained that the extra parking space was a condition of approval from WPCA and Mr. Stalis agreed to add the space to the plans.

Mrs. Carson asked if the project will be done in phases and was told that it would not be. Mr. Gingras explained that the utilities will need to be done all at once.

Ann Levesque, 230 Four Bridges Road, asked whether or not the 2,000 to 3,000 square-foot unit size included the garage area, and Mr. Stalis stated that the garage was in addition to the designated size. Mrs. Carson clarified by adding that the actual unit sizes begin at 1,660 square feet and go up to 2,500 square feet according to the model unit plans presented.

Mrs. Levesque asked about the high water table and its potential effect on any basements. She was concerned about a flooding problem and wondered if sump-pumps or some other accommodation would be included to handle such a problem. Mr. Gingras explained that footing drains will be installed beneath the basements and should prevent any water from collecting in unit basements.

She also asked how many stories the units will contain and where the brick or stone accents will be used. Jerry Gingras explained that they will be single-story and 1-1/2-story units. The brick and stone will be used on the front of some of the units, on either the gables or the porches as possible upgrades. The objective in providing these is to create a complimentary mix of materials so that the units won't have a "cookie-cutter" appearance.

Mrs. Levesque also inquired about the lighting, as she was concerned that not enough would be

provided. Mr. Stalis again stated that it was the intention to minimize the impact on the environment. He added that too much light can create blind spots. In addition, the homeowners will have a say in the lighting, as it will be centrally controlled by the Homeowners' Association.

Malcolm Chadbourne, 39 Lindell Drive, expressed concern over losing the wooded areas. He asked if a lot of the trees would be removed. It was explained that a good buffer would be maintained and that the trees within the buffer area would not be thinned. Mr. Walton explained that once completed, the site will probably not be visible from the road.

Mr. Chadbourne also asked if septic systems would be used. Mr. Stalis replied that the units would be hooked up to a sewer system, which is the reason for installing the pump station. When Mr. Chadbourne asked about a hook-up fee, he was told that each unit would have a fee of approximately \$2,500.00 for such purpose, which would be included with the purchase of the unit.

When he asked about taxes, Jerry Gingras explained that each unit owner would own 1/80th of the entire property and would be taxed for 1/80th of the land in addition to the taxes on the housing unit.

Mr. Chadbourne also asked about some of the unit specifics and learned that there will be garage door openers, an option for propane fireplaces, and individual mailboxes at the front of each unit.

Jim Rush, 31 Hall Hill Road, thought that more people should have been made aware of the meeting and was concerned that none of his neighbors were present or received individual notification. Mrs. Carson explained that notification of abutters is not required in this case and that a notice of the meeting was published twice in the Journal Inquirer in accordance with State Statutes as well as being posted on somersnow.com. There were also articles in the newspapers.

Mr. Rush also asked about emergency access for fire trucks and Mr. Stalis reminded him that an emergency access entry has been planned behind Joanna's Café.

He inquired about the buffer zone for abutting property owners and was told that all building has been planned so as to provide at least an 80-foot buffer, as regulated by the Town. He added that a 35-foot tree buffer will be included along the property line, also as regulated by the Town. This 35-foot buffer will apply to the walking trail as well. He asked if arborvitaes and hemlocks could be planted to add to the buffer, but Mr. Stalis noted that these tree types are not suitable to the area agriculturally.

He also asked a question about the sewer assessment, and Mrs. Carson recommended that he speak with the Town Sanitarian regarding his inquiries on that subject, as such issues were not under the purview of this Commission.

Jim O'Donnell, 95 Hall Hill Road, noted that his property abuts the parcel at 3 different sides and he operates a farm on his land. He is very concerned about the wildlife in the area and requested that the borders along the parcel be kept as thick as possible. He requested that a portion of the walking trail be removed or re-located to provide an adequate habitat for the wildlife and also to provide a better buffer for his property line. He submitted a proposal which outlined such a change and the Town Planner, Town Engineer, Landscape Architect, Developers and Commissioners reviewed and discussed it. It was decided that the walking trail would not be re-routed, but would be constructed with Mr. O'Donnell's concerns in mind, and placed with as much space from Mr. O'Donnell's property line as possible. Mr. Strauss also noted that the trail will only be 3 to 5 feet in width and designed for use as a walking trail only which should have a minimum impact on the area because it will encourage a nominal amount of foot traffic. Mr. Stalis noted that the design of the trail does not provide for cutting down or thinning trees along its pathway. In addition, the unit owners may wish to create a buffer between their homes and the trail and encourage vegetative growth even more in order to have such an effect. This will provide an increased buffer effect for Mr. O'Donnell.

JoAnn Batchelor, 85 Bridal Path, inquired about how far away the southern portion of the project will be away from Main Street and Mr. Stalis replied that it will be approximately 750 feet away and will connect into the current asphalt area behind Joanna's Café by way of the locked, gated emergency access. Pedestrians will be able to walk through the area, but it will be locked to everyday traffic.

Thomas Lyman, 128 Shaker Road, asked how deep the catch basins will be and whether they were expected to be adequate and was told they would be 3 to 6 feet deep, which should be well-suited to meet any potential need. Mr. Strauss explained how the drains would work by holding any water runoff and then releasing it slowly into the natural watercourses, thus avoiding any impact to them. Mr. Stalis explained that the water flow will actually be improved from its current situation once the project is completed.

Mr. Lyman asked about the fill quantity and was told that the developer's goal was to bring in as little as possible.

Mr. Lyman also inquired as to the installation of stop signs or traffic lights on Shaker Road and was told that no change will be necessary. A traffic study has been completed and the impact is expected to be minimal.

He also asked if a fence will be installed surrounding the development and what wattage of lights will be used on the premises. No fence is planned by the developer and 175 metal alloyed lighting is to be installed. Mr. Strauss added that the lighting will be within regulation which

includes only 1/2 foot candles which throw off about 25 feet of light from its source.

-
Phil Herbert, 48 Shaker Road, commented that with the extra rains recently water has been collecting on his property. Will this project increase that problem. Mr. Stalis replied that the project will not adversely effect drainage on Mr. Hebert's property.

Mr. Hebert also noted that Shaker Road is already very dangerous and is concerned about this project resulting in worsening driving conditions. He was told by First Selectman David Pinney that the State of Connecticut currently has plans to reconstruct the Shaker Road/190 intersection in the future.

Ann Levesque, 230 Four Bridges Road, asked about the timetable for fixing the intersection and Mr. Pinney responded that once the Town applies for the work to be done, a timetable will be set up. He expects that it will now be moved up on the list of priorities.

Mrs. Carson noted that the Town attorney has suggested the public hearing not be closed this evening so that a list of conditions can be discussed.

At 8:25 p.m., a motion was made by Cliff Bordeaux, seconded by Brad Pellessier and unanimously voted to continue the public hearing to the February 9, 2006 Planning meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall.

-
II. CALL TO ORDER

-
Chairman Karl Walton called the regular meeting to order at 8:32 p.m. Members Cliff Bordeaux, Brad Pellessier, Karl Walton and Alternates Greg Genlot (seated for Mike Collins) and Georgeanne Kuzman (seated for Michelle Hayward) were present and constituted a quorum. Town Planner Patrice Carson and Town Engineer, Merv Strauss were also present.

-
III. OLD BUSINESS

-
a. Discussion/Possible Decision: Special Use Permit Application for Age Restricted Housing, Shaker Road, Gingras Development, LLC

-
This item was deferred because the public hearing had not closed yet.

-
b. Subdivision Application #390: 6-Lots, LaCabana Road (off Mountain View Road), Jalbert

Mrs. Carson reported that the requested abutter's letters have been received, including the Morrills and the Vargos (who have agreed to let the necessary work be done on their properties), Karen Clark (who agreed to granting a Drainage Easement) and Machnicki (who agreed to having a new driveway installed).

In addition, most of the comments from Merv Strauss and Steve Jacobs have been addressed. However, the bond estimate is still outstanding. Mr. Strauss noted that he is still in need of a planting plan and explained to Mr. Jalbert that someone in the landscaping field should be consulted to create a plan that includes plantings that will stabilize the area to prevent erosion and maintain the slopes. The plan needs to be received by next Wednesday in order to set a public hearing for the next meeting, should the Commission decide to move forward with a hearing at that time.

Mr. Walton asked if there were any ill effects on the property as a result of the recent storm and Mr. Strauss noted that nothing serious was apparent.

A motion was made by Greg Genlot, seconded by Brad Pellessier and unanimously voted to set a public hearing for February 9, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall.

-
c. 2005/2006 Budget

-
Karl Walton met with Dave Pinney and endorsed the proposed increase in salary for Merv Strauss as well as discussing the cell phone concerns.

A motion was made by Brad Pellessier, seconded by Georgeanne Kuzman and unanimously voted to accept the budget as presented and forward it to the Board of Selectmen.

-
d. Other - No other old business was presented.

-
III. NEW BUSINESS - None was presented.

IV. DISCUSSION: PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A reminder was given that the next POCD meeting is Monday, January 30, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. at which time Mrs. Carson will present information on farm land preservation.

V. STAFF/COMMISSIONER REPORTS

No reports were given.

VII. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - There was none.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE AND BILLS

A letter was read from Marion Richard, Mountain Road, dated January 17, 2006.

A bill was presented in the amount of \$62.96 from the Journal Inquirer for the meeting of December 8, 2005. A motion was made by Greg Genlot, seconded by Brad Pellessier and unanimously voted to pay the bill as presented.

IX. MINUTES APPROVAL

A change was made to the title portion of the January 12, 2006 minutes. The designation of "Special" Meeting was changed to "Regular" Meeting. A motion was made by Greg Genlot, seconded by Georgeanne Kuzman and unanimously voted to approve the January 12, 2006 Planning minutes as amended.

X. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Cliff Bordeaux, seconded by Georgeanne Kuzman, and unanimously voted to adjourn the January 26, 2006 Planning meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Pellissier, Secretary

Robin Timmons, Recording Secretary

MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING.