

La Plata Planning Commission
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
March 5, 2002, 7:00 PM

Present: Chairman Raymond J. Becmer, Walter T. Sollars, Jr., Garyton C. Echols, Jr., Keith A. Hettel, C. Keith Back, Roy G. Hale - Commission Members; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier

Guests: (See roster.)

Minutes:

Chairman Becmer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and read the agenda. Mr. Miller amended the agenda to remove item #7, "Jamestowne Sec. 3 final plat". Chairman Becmer asked Mr. Hale to lead the Commission and audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of February minutes

Mr. Hale made a motion to approve the minutes of the February meeting. Mr. Sollars seconded the motion and it carried.

Adoption of Proposed Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Miller provided a brief background on the work done to date on the Comprehensive Plan, noting that the changes discussed by the Planning Commission were shown in the February, 2002 draft of the Plan. He noted that he had received the County Planning Department's comments today and that they are not substantive enough to change the Plan. Mr. Miller advised that the Planning Commission could adopt the Comprehensive Plan, which is scheduled for public hearing by the Mayor and Council on March 12.

Mr. Sollars made a motion to adopt the Proposed Comprehensive Plan (February, 2002). Mr. Hettel seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Jamestowne revised preliminary plat

Mr. Miller explained that the Planning Commission will need to approve Jamestowne's revised preliminary plat, which reduces from 101 to 95 lots, and approve the Hawthorne Greene preliminary plat, which is the senior living community abutting Jamestowne formerly called Williamsburg Village. The lots removed from Jamestowne have been included in the Hawthorne Greene subdivision. Mr. Miller provided each Planning Commission member with a copy of his memorandum of March 2, 2002, which contains a review of the Hawthorne Greene preliminary plat. He noted that the Hawthorne Greene preliminary plat shows 74 lots, and that the Board of Appeals approved their special exception to have 73 lots.

Tim Lessner, Lorenzi, Dodds and Gunnill, and John Sites, developer, were present to discuss these two preliminary plats. Mr. Lessner addressed the items listed in the Town Manager's review of Hawthorne Greene, noting he made changes to the preliminary plat mainly due to those review comments.

Mr. Hale made a motion to approve the Jamestowne revised preliminary plat. Mr. Sollars seconded the motion and it carried.

Mr. Hale made a motion to approve the Hawthorne Greene preliminary plat, with the condition that the Parks and Recreation Commission review and approve the recreation component. Mr. Sollars seconded the motion and it carried.

King's Grant revised preliminary plat

Mr. Miller explained that since the Planning Commission had disallowed the long cul-de-sac that had been proposed in Section 6, the plan had been redrawn to show a crossing of a ravine between Sections 6 and 7. Concern has been expressed by King's Grant residents about crossing the ravine. They do not want a crossing at the ravine, and would prefer a cul-de-sac. Mr. Miller further explained that the Planning Commission may ask the Mayor and Council to modify standards in a particular case when it is in the public's interest. He pointed out that the question is should the requirement of 800' maximum cul-de-sac length be altered due to the environmental concern regarding the ravine crossing.

Gore Bolton, of Bolton Latham, and Jerry Volman, developer, were present to discuss this with the Commission. Mr. Bolton described the main changes on the preliminary plat, which he referred to as "Plan B", were eliminating the ravine crossing and keeping the cul-de-sac in Section 6, and maintaining a treed area in Sections 7 and 8 where lots back up to each other. Mr. Bolton remarked that the Planning Commission had asked them to meet with the King's Grant homeowners association and they had done so. Mr. Bolton advised that they would need to file with MDE and the Army Corps of Engineers for a permit to cross the ravine, and that they have made efforts to be sure they have enough dirt to build the crossing. Mr. Bolton agreed that it was possible there would be greater restrictions on a permit now, such as a need to address life safety issues, with a possibility that the road width would be reduced from 36' to 24'. Mr. Miller agreed to discuss this with MDE when he meets with them on Wednesday [March 6]. It was pointed out that the Town is trying to eliminate the long cul-de-sac due to safety issues involved in cutting off emergency access to the 31 lots involved.

Mr. Back questioned why there was still a gap between lots 69 and 70, which had been addressed in the past. Mr. Volman stated it was his recollection that the Town asked for that as a possible future utility easement. Mr. Bolton assured Mr. Back that the 50-acre forest conservation easement could never have an approval for a road to be constructed there. Mr. Back suggested that the Planning Commission require on Section 8 that the land be deeded over to lots 69 and 70, to which Mr. Bolton responded there was no problem meeting that requirement, with the exception of 20' needed for a pump station there. Mr. Miller advised he would determine how much land is needed by the Town. Mr. Bolton and Mr. Volman also agreed this will be shown on the final plat for Section 8.

Chairman Becmer asked Mr. Volman for his comments regarding connecting Sections 6 and 7. Mr. Volman stated it can be done if they can get a permit to do it, even though it will be wider and deeper than they first thought.

Chairman Becmer invited King's Grant residents to offer comments:

Tim Hart, President of the King's Grant Homeowners Association, advised he had polled the neighborhood via approximately 75 e-mails. He advised that the responders said they do not want a crossing of the ravine. Mr. Hart expressed concern about flooding caused by the safety grates needed but which gather debris. Regarding the concern of having an 800' cul-de-sac, Mr. Hart pointed out that since the streets there are 36' wide and the houses sit back 50', emergency vehicles could drive through yards.

Jeanne Zito, 1043 Wales Dr. (lot 4), advised she prefers the cul-de-sac. Ms. Zito presented a letter to that effect which was signed by residents of "King's Grant-Royal Charter".

Joan Hrabe, 1045 Wales Dr (lot 5), advised she had seen fire trucks driving through there with no problem, and advised she prefers the cul-de-sac.

Jill Blackstone, 1059 Wales Dr. (lot 12), expressed concern about the bridge being very steep and the safety of children, and environmental concerns if the natural forested area is disturbed.

Tom Fritz, 107 Middlesex Ct., advised he had surveyed 6 families in Section 6 and others in the other sections, noting that none of the 42 families object to a cul-de-sac. Mr. Fritz noted he believes the Town should ask MDE to look at the site, and noted his concern about the vertical drop being a child safety issue. Mr. Fritz also noted that King's Grant residents are concerned about the dirt being moved from other sections to this section.

Dave Ashton, 1036 Wales Dr. (lot 15), stated his primary concern is the safety issue for children. He noted that the environmental impact would be significant if a crossing is built and asked that the crossing not be built.

After determining that no one else wished to comment, Chairman Becmer remarked that his employer, SMECO, finds that their biggest problem is access to roads due to flooding, and that the engineering is never enough to handle actual flooding. Chairman Becmer remarked that putting this crossing in would present a flooding hazard.

Chairman Becmer asked for a motion on the King's Grant revised preliminary plat. Mr. Echols made a motion that this item be tabled until more information is obtained following Mr. Miller's meeting with MDE, and due to the comments heard from residents. Mr. Hale seconded the motion. In discussion prior to the vote, Mr. Echols noted that this issue has been ongoing for two or more years, and that he felt it doesn't have to be decided tonight. Mr. Hale pointed out he thought the Planning Commission should have the benefit of all the information before making a decision. In response to Mr. Bolton's request to attend Mr. Miller's meeting with MDE, Mr. Miller advised he would call MDE and ask them to arrive early to meet on this topic. Vote on the motion: Mr. Echols, Mr. Hale, Mr. Sollars, and Mr. Hettel voted aye; Chairman Becmer voted nay. The motion passed by majority vote.

Mr. Miller advised he would send the Commission members a memo after his meeting with MDE, and would then call the members to poll them for their response. He advised he would pass their decision on to the Mayor and Council, and that this would need to come back to the Planning Commission and get

revised preliminary plat approval.

Other business

Mr. Miller provided each member with a copy of the entire layout of Steeplechase which they had requested, and suggested the Planning Commission schedule a work session to discuss the question of a reduction in lot sizes in cluster subdivisions. He advised that Heritage Green developers are also interested in a reduction in lot size. The Planning Commission agreed to schedule a work session on Tuesday, March 19, at 7:00 PM.

In response to Chairman Becmer's question, Mr. Miller advised that no one from the County has contacted him regarding the proposed connection of St. Charles Parkway to Rosewick Road.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier