

SOUTH HADLEY PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Application for Special Permit and Stormwater Management Permit for proposed Skinner Woods Flexible Development.

MINUTES OF JULY 22, 2019

As Approved

Present: Mark Cavanaugh, Chair; Melissa O'Brien, Vice-Chair; Diane Mulvaney, Clerk; Brad Hutchison, Member; Joanna Brown, Member; Larry Butler, Associate Member; Richard Harris, Town Planner; and Colleen Canning, Recorder; Tom Spring, applicant; and Bucky Sparkle, project engineer.

Chair Cavanaugh called the Public Hearing into order at 7:15 PM

Ms. Mulvaney read the Public Hearing notice aloud:

The South Hadley Planning Board, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40-A, Section 11, Massachusetts General Laws and Section 200-10 of the South Hadley Stormwater Management Bylaw will hold a public hearing on Monday July 22, 2019 at 7:15 p.m. in the Selectboard Meeting of the South Hadley Town Hall at 116 Main Street, South Hadley, MA to consider and discuss the application of Skinner Woods, LLC c/o Thomas Spring; 2 Cedar Ridge, South Hadley, MA 01075 for a Special Permit under Sections 255-19, 255-31, 255-35, 255-47, 255-85, 255-86, and Article IX of the Town's Zoning Bylaw and an application for a Stormwater Management Permit under Chapter 200 of the Town's Bylaws. The applicant is seeking a Special Permit and Stormwater Management Permit to allow development of a Flexible Residential Development consisting of ten (10) residential dwelling units in ten (10) free standing structures on a single parcel. Additional elements of the development include parking, landscaping, utilities, Stormwater management systems, septic disposal systems, open space and trails, and similarly related items.

The subject property is located along the northwest side of Amherst Road (aka Route 116) and identified on Assessor's Map Number #58 as Parcel #21 and on Assessor's Map Number #60 as Parcel #31. The property is located in the Agricultural zoning district and is within the Water Supply Protection Overlay District.

Plans and the application may be viewed at the Office of the Planning Board during normal office hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Additionally, the plans and application are posted on the Planning Board's "Project Plans A through L" page on the Town's website www.southhadleyma.gov in a section titled "Amherst Road SP Skinner Woods – 2019".

Any person interested in, or wishing to be heard regarding, this application should appear at the time and place designated.

Diane Supczak-Mulvaney, Clerk

South Hadley Planning Board

Publication: Friday, June 21, 2019

Friday, June 28, 2019

The applicant, Tom Spring, and the project engineer, Bucky Sparkle, were present at the meeting.

Chair Cavanaugh invited the project engineer to present to the Board.

Bucky Sparkle opened by introducing the proposed development and explaining the applications that had been submitted. He used a flip board with maps and narrative to aid in the presentation. The proposed flexible development would consist of 10 detached residential dwellings on 11.4 acres of land off Amherst Road. The applicant was seeking a Special Permit for both the proposed flexible development and for approval of development within the Water Supply Protection District. Separately, a Stormwater Management Plan was submitted.

Bucky Sparkle continued by describing the existing and proposed site conditions. The site was located on the South Hadley-Granby line along Route 116. The site consisted of 11.4 acres of land which included an abandoned excavation site; creating a steep drop off. The front portion of the site was the intended area for development as it was level. The proposed site would include 10 dwellings of varying sizes ranging from 1,700 SF to 2,200 SF. A single road, following the footprint of the old gravel quarry access, was proposed. The dwellings would be serviced through the municipal water department and sewage would be managed on site. The development would retain greenspace by keeping 90% of large trees on site. Out of the 11.4 acres included within the development, only 2.7 acres would be built upon. The remainder would be kept as open space with the potential for public access and connectivity with hiking trails beyond the property line.

Bucky Sparkle continued by explaining the proposed ownership structure of the development. The submitted plan reflected a condo structure with no property lines or private lots. However, through recent discussions with the applicant, it was proposed to add property lines to create private lots. Mr. Harris observed that the inclusion of property lines was a significant change from the original submission and would require the resubmission of the Special Permit application. Upon reflection, the applicant decided to proceed with the originally submitted condo structure.

Bucky Sparkle proceeded by detailing the architectural character of the surrounding area and explained how it would be incorporated within the development. Abutting properties to the site largely consisted of single-family-homes built in the ‘cape cod’ and ‘colonial’ style. The proposed dwellings within the Skinner Woods Development would consist of two and three bedroom single-family-homes with a modern aesthetic that would retain the size and ‘demeanor’ of the existing abutting properties.

Flexible Developments were compared to their alternative, Subdivision Developments, for the Boards consideration. Bucky Sparkle explained that, within Flexible Developments, a density standard is used to determine how many dwellings are allowable in a ‘cluster’. This was

determined by a number of factors including zoning, utility impacts and other restrictions. The density bonus allowed for an additional building lot for every 10% increase in open space over 30%; with a maximum density bonus of 50%. With 10 units, the project was under the allowable number of lots. Mr. Harris observed that the type of density bonus method used did not apply to this project. He explained that, as the project was within the Water Supply Protection District, the Subdivision Plan Formula needed to be used. Bucky Sparkle responded that, as the Subdivision Plan Formula is more lenient than the method used, the number of lots would still be under that allowable amount.

Bucky Sparkle continued by detailing waivers from Subdivisions Regulations submitted for street design. He explained that the regulations require 50 foot wide right-of-ways. However, as the proposed development is a condominium, there is no right-of-way. The site design reflected 75 feet between buildings. Additionally, the applicant requested a waiver from dead-end street requirement. Streets 400 feet or longer require a 'Y' or 'T' turnaround. Bucky Sparkle explained that proposed street would effectively be 350 feet as no construction was proposed at portions of the beginning and end of the street.

As the proposed development would be in the Water Supply Protection District, a Special Permit was submitted. Bucky Sparkle explained that the number of dwellings was under the allowable amount for development in the district. Stormwater management would be permanently maintained and restrictions would be placed on chemical use.

Bucky Sparkle reviewed the proposed development's consistency with the Town's Master Plan. The development would secure open space in a rural area, bring economic development to the Route 116 corridor, and secure 8.7 acres of open space.

The development's impact on local traffic was assessed. Route 116 currently operates at less than half its capacity with around 6,600 trips per day. The development would increase the number by less than 100; which was not a significant impact. Bucky Sparkle continued by describing the proposed signage on site. Signs would include a 'Skinner Woods' development sign at the entrance and would include turtle protection signs at priority habitat areas. Accessibility to the development was addressed in detailing the nearby sidewalks, bike paths, and bus routes.

The stormwater management plan met all state and local requirements. A peer-review of the project from the Town's consulting engineer described the project as 'feasible'. Bucky Sparkle explained that, following the peer review, soil testing was performed. Long term management of the development would be reflective of four two-bedroom units and six three-bedroom units each with two to four parking spaces per unit.

Bucky Sparkle concluded his presentation by offering an outlook on what the Board could expect from the submission of a Definitive Plan. An updated stormwater management plan, detailed septic designs, grading information, and landscaping design would be submitted as part of the Definitive Plan.

Mr. Harris referenced a few concerns that needed to be addressed prior to the close of the public hearing. He explained that the most recent digital submission from the applicant was not downloadable. For this reason, the supplemental information was not able to be posted on the Town's website or shared with the Board members. Additionally, the application for Flexible Development stated that ownership of the 8.7 acres of open space would be transferred to the Conservation Commission. However, communication of this was not shared with the Conservation Commission and they subsequently do not want stewardship of the open space. Therefore, the findings of the 'Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)' on the current application were not accurate to the actual conditions. The application would need to be resubmitted to NHESP for review. Mr. Harris also requested that the applicant formally respond to each of the points made in the Town's consulting engineer's peer-review.

Ms. Brown referenced a comment letter submitted by the Conservation Commission regarding the proposed project. Mr. Harris explained that the project was not jurisdictional to the Conservation Commission but their comments and concerns could be of benefit to the Board. Regarding the Conservation Commission comment letter, Vice-Chair O'Brien inquired about the original reclamation terms of the old gravel quay. Mr. Harris responded that, as the operation has not been in practice for decades, reclamation terms were not as substantive as they are today. However, reclamation could be in the interest of the applicant as attractive landscaping would make the dwellings more marketable to potential buyers. The applicant would consider it.

Mr. Hutchison addressed the consultant and recognized the progresses made from the previous submission. He recommended that infrastructure connecting the dwellings to the open space could be implemented. He also requested that topographical information be provided to visually offer a clear understanding where the site slopes at the old quarry.

Vice-Chair O'Brien inquired about public access to the 'public' open space. She asked how it would be structured and would things like parking for public access be incorporated? Tom Spring, project applicant, expressed hesitation about having a formal trail on site. Mr. Harris offered the option that a permanent restriction could be placed on the open space that would require that it remain as such.

Ms. Mulavney inquired about communication with Granby abutters. Mr. Harris explained that department staff sent out notices to Granby abutters following the receipt of the certified abutters list from the town of Granby sent to the South Hadley Planning Department via the project engineer, Bucky Sparkle.

Mr. Hutchison inquired if there was a requirement for sidewalks. Mr. Harris explained that the proposed location was a low traffic area but there could be the potential for pedestrian paths on site.

Ms. Brown inquired how many trees were to be removed during construction of the proposed development. Bucky Sparkle responded that 14 trees on site were considered to be 'significant'. Of those 14 trees, three were proposed to be removed. Mr. Harris requested that the applicant create a map of the as-built conditions that show the location of the trees to be removed. He added that there would be a mitigation requirement for removal.

Chair Cavanaugh opened the hearing to public comment.

Lucia Foley, Shadow Brook Estates, addressed the Board. She liked the potential for public access to open space. However, in her experience she observed that residents of private roads are often not fond of the general public walking down the road. She advised that if there was access to public open space that an alternative public entrance be implemented.

Christy Rearden, unidentified address, addressed the Board. She expressed the potential for frustrated residents if public access was granted to the open space. As the proposed road was private, the residents would be financially responsible for all maintenance activities. Therefore, the residents would functionally be subsidizing public use of the property which could create problems.

Mr. Hutchison inquired about affordable housing requirements for flexible developments. Mr. Harris explained that affordable could not be required unless the development was a 40R or 40B project; which this project is not.

Ms. Brown submitted written comment from Dr. Stephen Franz highlighting concern for rare and endangered species at the development's proposed location.

Mr. Harris reviewed what additional steps need to be taken to close the Public Hearing as follows:

- The applicant needed to draft a written response to the peer-review performed by the Town's consulting engineer
- The applicant need to resend the most recent supplemental information digitally so that the information could be posted on the Town's website and shared with members of the Board
- A map with as-built conditions showing significant trees intended to be removed must be submitted
- The applicant needed to re-submit their plan to the *Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program* detailing that stewardship of the open space would not be transferred to the Conservation Commission.
- The applicant needed to respond in writing to the Conservation Commission's comment letter.
- The applicant need to clarify their intention in granting access to the public to open space.

Chair Cavanaugh inquired if there was a motion to continue the Public Hearing.

Motion: Ms. Mulvaney moved to continue the Public Hearing until August 19, 2019 at 6:45 PM. Vice-Chair O'Brien seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) members voted in favor of the motion.

Respectfully Submitted,
As Approved
Colleen Canning, recorder

Appendix

Document	Document Location
Flipboard Public Hearing Presentation for Skinner Woods Flexible Development	Planning Files
Submitted Comment from Dr. Stephen Franz	Planning Files