

TOWN OF FORT MILL  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
March 16, 2021  
112 Confederate Street  
6:30 PM

Live Viewing Online: Request Access by emailing before 5:00 pm on Tuesday, March 16, 2021  
to Penelope G. Karagounis, Planning Director at pkaragounis@fortmillsc.gov  
Public Access by Phone: Dial (toll free) 1-877-309-2073  
and use access code 861-822-317

Present: James Traynor, Dan Stout, Matthew Lucarelli, Andy Agrawal, Hynek Lettang, Chris Wolfe, Planning Director Penelope Karagounis, Senior Planner Alex Moore, Assistant Town Manager Chris Pettit, Amy Massey (Kimley-Horn), Dan Ballou (Attorney with Morton and Gettys), Chris Micci (DR Horton), John Holcomb (Kimley-Horn), Lynn Martin, Rob Logan, Fred and Ann Tanner, Andrew Gansner, Boyd Rogers, Trudie Heemsoth, Chris Tinklenberg, and Denise Gordon

Absent: Ben Hudgins

Chairman James Traynor called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:30 PM on Tuesday March 16<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman Traynor gave opportunity to the Planning Commission to review and comment on the February 16, 2021 meeting minutes as presented with the meeting packet. There being no comments from Commission members on these minutes, Chairman Traynor entertained a motion to approve the minutes. Chris Wolfe made a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Dan Stout seconded the motion to accept the minutes as submitted. The Planning Commission then voted 6-0 to approve the minutes as submitted. Ben Hudgins was absent at the March 16, 2021 Planning Commission meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS ITEMS**

### **1. Annexation Request: DR Horton**

Chairman Traynor then noted that there was one new business item on the Planning Commission agenda. He then turned the meeting over to Penelope Karagounis, Town of Fort Mill Planning Director to make the opening presentation on the agenda item.

Ms. Karagounis stated that this agenda item consisted of an application submitted by DR Horton, representing the current property owner, Robert Paul Snodgrass, to voluntarily annex 194.580 acres of property. This parcel of land is located at 2601 S. Doby's Bridge Road and is contiguous to the existing Town of Fort Mill corporate limits.

The current York County zoning designation is Rural Development District (RUD) which allows one dwelling unit per acre. Thus, along with the annexation request, DR Horton is asking for a Town of Fort Mill zoning designation of R-10, One Family Residential. The R-10 zoning district is intended for low to medium density, single-family development on lots of 10,000 square feet or more.

Upon annexation, it is the applicant's intent to obtain Fort Mill subdivision approval for 267 single-family detached units at a gross density of 1.37 DU/AC. The Town of Fort Mill's 2040 Comprehensive Plan indicates that the subject property is located within an area designated for low-to-moderate density.

The low-to-moderate density land use category provides for densities of up to 3 dwelling units per acre. The Comp Plan further indicates that developments within the low-to-moderate density classification have lot sizes ranging from an average of 7,000 square feet to 15,000 square feet.

The proposed R-10 lot regime on this site fits within the scale of adjacent developments such as Massey which includes many lots less than 8,000 square feet in size. In concept, this annexation proposal represents the opportunity for an efficiently designed project which works within the constraints of the site.

Such site limitations, including the Duke Power right-of-way, slopes, and floodplain, will require lots to be clustered within more developable areas. With respect to traffic mitigation, the applicant has agreed to off-site improvements as enumerated and illustrated within Exhibit D.

In addition to traffic, the improvements will also include much needed pedestrian and bicycle lanes within the immediate area of development.

Planning Staff therefore recommends in favor of annexation with a zoning designation of R-10. Please note that this recommendation is for annexation only and currently includes no recommendation on subdivision approval or denial. Such a recommendation will occur within the future subdivision review stage and only after final annexation action is taken by the Fort Mill Town Council.

Ms. Karagounis then noted that the town's traffic engineering consultant, Amy Massey, PE, with Kimley Horn was present at the meeting. Additionally, she indicated that Chris Micci with DR Horton was in attendance along with the project's design professional, John Holcomb, and DR Horton's attorney Dan Ballou.

Ms. Karagounis then shared an exhibit provided by DR Horton which consisted of an illustrative lotting plan of the proposed project. She then turned the meeting over to the DR Horton team for them to give a presentation to the Planning Commission.

Dan Ballou gave a general overview of the DR Horton annexation and project proposal. He indicated that if approved this would be the first DR Horton development in the Town of Fort Mill. Mr. Ballou highlighted the overall low, gross density of the project, the robust nature of the traffic improvements, along with over 50% open space within the site.

The site design professional, John Holcomb of Kimley Horn then expounded on Mr. Ballou's information. Mr. Holcomb then went over some of the technical details of the DR Horton

development proposal. He noted the amenity center area along with anticipated trails and athletic fields.

Mr. Holcomb then drew attention to the required traffic improvements as required by the traffic impact analysis (TIA) which was performed by the town's traffic engineer. These mandated upgrades include the addition of approximately one-half mile of three-lane street section along S. Doby's Bridge Road, between Red Forest Way and Dryden Street.

Additionally, there will be bike-lanes and sidewalk installed on either side of S. Doby's Road where this three-lane section is built. A right-turn lane will be established at Dudley Drive along with a right-turn lane from S. Doby's Bridge Road onto the Fort Mill Parkway with a maximized storage lane from the Doby's Bridge Commercial Tract driveway.

Mr. Holcomb then stated that the DR Horton team had worked through multiple plan iterations until the current design was deemed acceptable by town staff for consideration by Planning Commission. He remarked that a new lift station would be needed as part of the future engineering design process.

Mr. Holcomb commented upon to site open space that the plan delivers along with the challenges of site design due to the topographic fall toward the Catawba River. He noted that a good portion of the lots do not share a rear property line with another lot. This along with the overall lower density of the site can provide an enhanced, natural setting.

Mr. Holcomb then called attention to the southern portion of the site plan containing a one-hundred-foot section of a future connector road to be constructed through this property at a later date. Such a roadway would alleviate some of the traffic pressure from S. Doby's Bridge Road.

Chris Micci with DR Horton then introduced himself and touched on several points including the opportunity for the preservation of open space as proposed within the plan, project amenities, and a targeted, home price point of \$450,000. Mr. Micci stated that he anticipated this would inch up above this toward \$500,000 as the project comes to fruition.

Mr. Ballou then wrapped up the presentation by saying that they appreciated the Planning Commission's consideration of the annexation proposal. He stated that they believed the project would fit within the town's comprehensive plan.

Planning Commission Chairman James Traynor then asked three questions. His first question was regarding the timing of the dedication of the future connector road right-of-way within this site. His second question was regarding the trail system within the site and if this was being coordinated with the Carolina Thread Trail. Thirdly, he stated that while the pool amenity area sounded good, he also asked if there were going to be any park areas that contained active areas such as playground equipment, etc.?

Mr. Holcomb responded that the collector road right-of-way would be publicly dedicated to the Town of Fort Mill. Then he noted that the alignment of this collector is currently located in the general area as depicted on the comprehensive plan map.

Mr. Micci then stated that DR Horton had not had the opportunity to engage with representatives of the Carolina Thread Trail but that they were open to doing so. He then noted that in addition to the main amenity area DR Horton did envision constructing pocket parks throughout the remainder of the project.

Ms. Karagounis then interjected that the collector as shown on the concept plan does mirror the comprehensive plan map which in turn was gleaned from the Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS) collector road study. She then indicated that the Carolina Thread Trail master plan in fact does not have the trail near this property. Thus, this trail would be completely internal to this project.

Chairman Traynor thanked Ms. Karagounis for her input and then noted that internal trails with views of the Catawba River might be something that DR Horton could work toward within this project.

Chairman Traynor then noted the Duke Energy easement on the property with respect to open space. He stated that he has observed instances in which such areas of neighborhoods have been utilized for active open space such as soccer fields. This notwithstanding opinions regarding the perceived harm of electromagnetic fields generated by such facilities. Chairman Traynor stated that he did not know if Duke Energy currently allows this type of use within its easements. He asked if this had been investigated by DR Horton.

Mr. Micci responded that DR Horton has indeed explored the possibility of having recreational fields within this Duke Energy right-of-way. He stated that at this time, DR Horton did not have a commitment from Duke Energy on letting them move forward with these recreational fields.

Chairman Traynor thanked Mr. Micci for this information and asked if anyone else had questions.

Planning Commission member Hynek Lettang then stated that it was his understanding that the existing Duke Energy easement on the property contained 200,000-volt lines. He then stated that you should limit exposure of residents to .5 milligauss on a sustained level. Mr. Lettang said that typically for the power level of 200,000 volt lines this would be a distance of 700-feet. He then asked if the potential of electromagnetic exposure had been investigated for this project.

Mr. Holcomb responded that they did not have the answer to this currently, but that an additional buffer of 25-feet had been added parallel to each side of the existing Duke Energy easement. Thus, the lots are not immediately against the easement. He indicated that they would look further into the issue of electromagnetic exposure as related to this project.

Chairman Traynor responded that at one time, Duke Energy had the necessary equipment to measure the strength of electromagnetic fields. He indicated that it was his experience with past projects that Duke Energy was always willing to come out and provide measurements.

Planning Commissioner Dan Stout then asked about the property located to the west of the collector road as shown on the DR Horton conceptual plan. His question was if the traffic impact analysis included the area immediately to the west of the collector road as shown.

Ms. Karagounis indicated that the TIA did not include this area. She further noted that the property that Mr. Stout referred to is known as the Springland, Inc. "Tract—7 McAlhane" property which consists of approximately 845 acres. This respective property already has a development agreement which has been approved by the Town of Fort Mill. The RFATS collector road study indicates that a roadway would traverse the Tract—7 McAlhane parcel from White's Road. At such time that the Tract—7 McAlhane property initiates the process to develop, they will have to design their plan to align with the proposed collector road on the DR Horton property. This would ultimately connect in with the DR Horton property where the collector road is depicted on their concept plan.

Planning Commissioner Andy Agrawal then asked Ms. Karagounis if we had any sense of this project's impact on Catawba Ridge High School.

Ms. Karagounis indicated that at this time there was no information available on this. However, she stated that staff could get this information from the Fort Mill School District at a later date as the project would need to come back to Planning Commission subsequent to annexation approval for subdivision review and approval.

Planning Commissioner Chris Wolfe then made several statements about the annexation proposal. He stated that he believed the R-10 designation was good, but that he believed R-15 would be better. Mr. Wolfe stated that the green space, though much of it due to the Duke Energy easement and topography, was a positive. He noted that the trails as contemplated were a positive, but he would like to see more along with public access to the Catawba River if possible.

Mr. Wolfe then stated that his greatest misgivings about the project was the additional traffic that it would generate in this part of Fort Mill. It was his understanding that even with the proposed road improvements as noted within the TIA, traffic would still be an issue. Mr. Wolfe then called on Ms. Amy Massey, Town of Fort Mill consulting traffic engineer, to further expound upon the TIA.

Ms. Amy Massey, PE with Kimley-Horn then introduced herself and noted that her firm had indeed prepared the TIA of record for this proposed annexation. Ms. Massey reiterated that the study scope of the TIA was determined with the Town of Fort Mill, York County, and SCDOT. The TIA along with the transportation mitigation agreement (TMA) was then reviewed and approved by each of these agencies along with the DR Horton.

Ms. Massey then directed everyone's attention to an exhibit which illustrated the location and parameters of the required road improvements that would result from this project. She noted that the traffic volumes generated would not only include the existing volumes but also what was incorporated as a 4.6% annual growth rate on top of the existing traffic annually compounded into the future year of 2026. Also incorporated into this were the eight, off-site developments that were determined to be included in the calculation. Finally, the proposed site traffic was then added in.

Ms. Massey continued with the numbers for the proposed DR Horton project alone. This site would be expected to contribute 194 AM, peak hour trips and 261 PM, peak hour trips. These site, peak hour numbers are during the highest, peak hour of the adjacent streets. All of this is then compounded together. This results in the various levels of service as reported within the TIA.

Ms. Massey then stated that she could give a brief rundown of these operations if it would be helpful to Planning Commission.

Mr. Wolfe indicated that it would be helpful for Ms. Massey to now provide this. He noted that the TIA reflected that the Level-of-Service "F" in the AM peak hour and a Level-of-Service "D" in the PM peak hour for background traffic would be exhibited at the intersection of Fort Mill Parkway and N. Doby's Bridge Road.

Ms. Massey stated that as for the Town of Fort Mill requirements, and essentially SCDOT's requirements as well, the mitigation that would be provided by the developer should be the "delta," or change, in the levels of service that occur once you add the proposed site traffic to the road network. So, you are comparing the 2026 site traffic numbers with all the growth, with all the other development, and with the change once you add the site traffic in.

Ms. Massey continued as she noted that the developer should only be responsible for the change in site traffic due to their project. As an example, she used the point that Mr. Wolfe had noted on the future level of service as reflected within the TIA at Fort Mill Parkway and N. Doby's Bridge Road. This location would indeed be a Level-of-Service "F" in the AM. However, there would only be a six-second increase in wait time with the "build" scenario. In the PM peak we are seeing a Level-of-Service "D," which considering that N. Doby's is an arterial roadway, this Level-of-Service would be meeting the required standard. Therefore, no improvements were recommended at this intersection.

Ms. Massey then presented another example with Fort Mill Parkway and S. Doby's Bridge Road. At this respective intersection there are improvements that will be required. This includes a north-bound right-turn lane that will be maximized back to the Doby's Commercial Tract driveway, which is about 250-feet. With the background condition in 2026, in the AM peak there will be a two-second delay increase compared to the 2026 build-out with road improvements. Then in the PM peak, there will be a five-second decrease in delay time from the 2026 background to the 2026 build-out with road improvements. So, at this intersection, with improvements, you end up with a net improvement, and better than background traffic only.

Ms. Massey also gave the example of the required improvement of the Dudley Drive right-turn-lane. She noted that while this new turn lane does not improve the existing situation as much, but the SCDOT does recommend for schools to have not only the south-bound left turn lane that is already there, but also a north-bound right turn lane. In this case the north-bound, right turn lane would be 150-feet in length with the 40 MPH posted speed limit. Thus, this right-turn lane was recommended as mitigation.

For this intersection, the AM peak traffic is controlled by school district personnel directing the ingress/egress of vehicles. This skews the AM delay downward. Then, in the PM peak, the only way to improve delay would be a traffic signal, or perhaps a roundabout. Ms. Massey indicated that her team investigated both of these, and that neither would be helpful nor even warranted. Thus, the north-bound right-turn lane is what they came up with for mitigation to satisfy the PM peak hour, along with a spot-improvement by the developer.

Mr. Wolfe thanked Ms. Massey for her input and clarified that he was not suggesting that developers fix all the traffic issues in Fort Mill. Rather, he noted that while the road improvements that were recommended by the TIA do help, there is simply the bigger problem of traffic in this area which affects those residents already there. Mr. Wolfe stated that at some point the overall issue of traffic is going to have to be dealt with because we cannot just continue to add traffic to roads that already have problems. He went on to say that if we know that we are going to be in a Level-of-Service "F" and we know that there is other development continuing, then we can never get ahead of the traffic issue.

Mr. Wolfe acknowledged that the development as proposed was good on its own, but in that Doby's Bridge Road is a two-lane, farm-to-market road, it is his opinion that the transportation infrastructure in this section of town simply cannot support more growth.

Chairman Traynor then thanked Mr. Wolfe for his input. He then asked the DR Horton team if they had any response to this.

Mr. Micci responded that they spend a good deal of time working on the TIA with Kimley-Horn and SCDOT. He noted that they would like to think that the mitigation proposals put forward by both, and that DR Horton was agreeable to, will help be part of a solution. Mr. Micci stated that they understand that the town has existing traffic issues. He noted that they wanted to be part of the community and part of the solution. While they may not be all of the solution, they certainly want to do their best in putting their best foot forward.

Chairman Traynor then noted that there would certainly be time to go into more detail on this issue when and if the subdivision review submittal occurs.

Senior Planner Alex Moore then noted to the DR Horton team that one of the adjacent landowners had concerns about the status of their existing residential driveway as it may be affected by this development. He asked if they had engaged in any conversations with this landowner and if DR Horton would be amenable to working with this landowner to maintain his driveway.

Mr. Micci responded that they were indeed agreeable to working with this landowner on this issue. He noted that DR Horton had some conversation with the landowner regarding this driveway and that there were also ongoing conversations with SCDOT on what this may look like. They want to help him keep his driveway at its current location. SCDOT seems to initially be very positive and open about this.

Ms. Karagounis responded that from her understanding from SCDOT, since DR Horton is asking for an encroachment permit, they will have to meet agency requirements in terms of spacing from the already established driveway. If DR Horton cannot meet SCDOT distance requirements, then there are waivers that SCDOT processes with the encroachment permit.

Chairman Traynor then asked if there were any other Planning Commission questions. There being none, he noted that he did like the lower density of the project. He agreed that the site conditions certainly played a role in the lower density. He noted that there would be more opportunity to

examine the development plan later during the subdivision review phase if the town council agreed to annex the property.

Chairman Traynor then entertained a motion.

Mr. Lucarelli made a motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10. and Mr. Agrawal seconded the motion.

Chairman Traynor then asked if there were any other questions or comments before the vote. There being none, Chairman Traynor began the roll call voting.

Chairman Traynor voted in favor of the motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10. With this, he also noted that some very good questions were raised about the potential project during the meeting. He indicated that if the subdivision came back before Planning Commission, that the commission members would certainly look for progress on the issues that were talked about during the meeting.

Chris Wolfe then voted against the motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10.

Matt Lucarelli voted in favor of the motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10.

Andy Agrawal voted in favor of the motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10.

Hynek Lettang voted against the motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10.

Dan Stout voted in favor of the motion to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10.

Thus, Planning Director Karagounis then noted that the motion will go forward to town council as a recommendation by Planning Commission to approve the annexation ordinance with the zoning designation of R-10 by a vote of 4-2. The public hearing at town council will be held on April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman Traynor then reiterated that it was the role of Planning Commission in this process is to make a recommendation to the Fort Mill Town council. The Fort Mill Town Council then has the authority to either say yes or no to all recommendations from the Planning Commission.

Chairman Traynor then thanked everyone for attending the Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Ballou, legal counsel for DR Horton, thanked Chairman Traynor and the Planning Commission for the opportunity to appear before them. He stated that it had been very helpful for the DR Horton team to hear the concerns of the Planning Commission.

Chairman Traynor thanked Mr. Ballou for his comments. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.