

County Tables Rezoning Request

By NOLAN STOUT Daily News-Record
Jan 25, 2017

HARRISONBURG — Rockingham County isn't ready to approve the second phase of an affordable housing complex.

The Board of Supervisors tabled a request Wednesday from Surber Development and Consulting LLC to rezone a 5.3-acre parcel on Reservoir Street from medium residential to general residential for phase two of Robinson Park apartments.

Supervisors Pablo Cuevas, Michael Breeden, Rick Chandler, Bill Kyger and Fred Eberly voted to table the request.

The board wants more time to address concerns from fire and rescue and the sheriff's office, as well as potential public transportation issues.

The new zoning designation would allow the developer to build more units on the property.

Surber Development plans to purchase the property once it has been rezoned.

The parcel at 2770 Reservoir St. is owned by the estate of Mary Madalene Lambert, who died in March. It is valued at \$250,600, according to online real estate records.

No one spoke at a public hearing on the request Wednesday.

Kyger asked the county's senior planner, James May, if Suber planned to provide transit service. May said the company had not.

Recent development in the county, particularly student-housing complexes, have created a growing need for transportation from the area just outside Harrisonburg's southeastern city limits.

"At some point, as areas develop in more high density, the expectation is certainly going to be there for some sort of mass public transit and we are not in that business," Kyger said. "Or at least we're not in that business yet. And it's not a business I'd prefer to seek to get into anytime soon."

Last year, two off-campus housing developments were approved, both of which require transportation to James Madison University.

The first, The Retreat at Harrisonburg, is across the street from Robinson Park. A 178-unit complex with 715 bedrooms, The Retreat is scheduled to open for the start of the 2017-18 school year this fall.

Supervisors approved Altitude at Stone Port along Port Republic Road in September. It will be an apartment complex with no more than 425 bedrooms in three buildings. It is planned to open for the 2018-19 school year.

The two join Aspen Heights, which opened just south of the city on Port Road in 2013 as the county's first student-housing complex. All three developments must provide transportation for students, either through a private service or the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation.

Local developer Dain Hammond, who is building Altitude, has said HDPT's rate for all three developments would be \$118,180 in fall 2017 and increase 3 percent annually. They are partnering to seek a private bus service to run from the three properties.

"I just think it's something that we can't fumble away because there's going to be a need there, particularly in those corridors," Kyger said. "It's an issue that has to be addressed at some point."

Surber Development and HEGM Corp. comprise Charlotte, N.C.-based SEGM VA LLC, which started building the first phase of Robinson Park apartments last summer. The first phase — which will have 12 one-bedroom apartments, 44 two-bedroom units, 32 three-bedroom apartments and a clubhouse — is expected to be finished early this year.

The \$11.6 million first phase is being built off Fieldale Place on property formerly owned by Terry and Lorri Taylor, who sold it to its current owners for a little over \$1 million in January 2016.

WB Properties & Construction, headquartered in Calabash, N.C., is the general contractor phase one.

The complex's second phase would contain 80 units in four apartment buildings. Two buildings would have 24 units while the others would have 18 and 12.

Jen Surber, SEGM's managing partner, said construction of phase two of the Robinson Park development is expected to begin in spring 2018 and take around 10 months to complete.

Tenants must earn 60 percent or less of the median household income for the area to rent at the complex.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is using \$58,400 as the median for Rockingham County.

The complex is being partially financed with federal grant funds and tax credits allocated by the Virginia Housing Development Authority.

In other business, the board unanimously approved a permit for a motor vehicle repair shop in Briery Branch.

The request by Shannon Dale Click to convert an existing outbuilding into the shop on a 4-acre parcel of agriculturally zoned land at 7098 Curry Drive was tabled earlier this month over concerns for site access.

The site plan submitted with the permit application listed access to the property from Curry Road, which is a private road. Neighbors were concerned with the amount of traffic the business would create.

The board asked Click's father, Roger, who owns an adjacent property, to modify the right of way on his parcel so the property can be accessed off Community Center Road. The permit is contingent on the right of way adjustment being approved

A permit for a repair shop is allowed on the land as long as no more than six vehicles are parked outside the building while it is open and no vehicles are sold.

As a condition of the permit, Click agreed the hours would be 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Click will also build an 8-foot fence between the building and properties along Community Center Road.