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Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, August 9, 2017

- IX. **Riverwoods Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) – Stone Quarry Drive.** Site plan, lot line adjustment, and conditional use application for CCRC to be located on a vacant 11.3-acre site in the northeast quadrant of the junction of Route 108 and Route 4 (one lot in from Route 108). The project will contain independent living apartments, assisted-living apartments, memory-care units, and skilled-nursing units. Applicant - The RiverWoods Group, c/o Justine Vogel, CEO. Property owner - Rockingham Properties, c/o Dave Garvey, partner. Engineer – Jeff Clifford, Altus Engineering. Landscape architect – Robbi Woodburn. Attorney – Sharon Cuddy Somers, DT&C. Map 11, Lot 8-1 through 8-15. Office Research District.
- Accept application as complete, schedule public hearing for August 23, and start the process of establishing an ad hoc architectural subcommittee to provide nonbinding comments on the design.

Please note the following:

Process

- 1) Acceptance. I recommend the application be accepted as complete with the understanding that any outstanding items will be submitted with sufficient notice to allow for full review by the Town. The main items that will be submitted later include the drainage analysis and conditional use application. There is no problem with starting review of the site plan application now as it is substantially complete.
- 2) Design review. The Planning Board reviewed a preliminary design review application for this project on May 10 and June 14, 2017. A site walk was held and a public hearing was held on June 14. The preliminary review was closed that evening.
- 3) Technical Review Group. The TRG reviewed the new application with the applicant on August 1. I will send minutes of the meeting shortly.
- 4) Site walk. The board held a site walk for the preliminary design and will see whether an additional one would be helpful.

- 5) Site Plan Regulations. I will do my review of the application in the next week or so and will include comments about pertinent provisions from the Site Plan Regulations for the next meeting.
- 6) Conditional Use. A conditional use will be needed for the driveway, parking areas, and any other structures within the Wetland Conservation Overlay District. The applicant will submit the application soon and expects to meet with the Conservation Commission at their September 14 meeting.
- 7) Boundary line adjustment. According to the applicant, “the two lot line adjustments, one with Lot 12 (the DPW parcel to the east) and one with Lot 8-0 (the Land Options, LLC parcel to the west) will be submitted in early August pending finalization of the surveyor’s final lot line adjustment plan and review of associated documents by the subject parties.”
- 8) Department reviews. We will obtain signoffs from all departments prior to final action. The Department of Public Works believes that they will have the time to conduct their review in house.

Project

- 9) Riverwoods and the proposed project. The applicant states in their application: *The Formal Site Plan Review Application presents site plans for RiverWoods Durham, a continuing care retirement community (CCRC), proposed by The RiverWoods Group (TRWG) on 11.30-acres of land located off Stone Quarry Drive in Durham, New Hampshire. TRWG is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation that owns and operates three vibrant, self-contained, not-for-profit CCRCs in the Town of Exeter. Conceived by a grassroots group of Durham and seacoast area residents, RiverWoods opened in 1994 and remains true to its founders' original inspiration - that growing older should enhance, not diminish, the opportunity for a productive and rewarding life. The original campus, now known as The Woods, has been occupied for over 20 years. A second community, known as The Ridge, was opened in 2004 followed by the opening of The Boulders in 2010. Approximately one third of the residents are local, one third are from the region, and the other third, who may have lived anywhere in the country, have ties to the Seacoast area – either from past education experience or they have younger relatives in the area.*

The successful reputation of the RiverWoods communities coupled with the changing demographics of our society have created a significant unmet demand for the independent living housing units and continuing care offered at RiverWoods’ facilities. Consistent with its charter, the Board of Directors of TRWG proposes to build a facility on Stone Quarry Drive that will include 150 independent living units, 24 assisted living units, 24 memory care units and 24 skilled care nursing home beds as well as central commons areas that will service the entire community.

Appearance

- 10) *Key issue. As was discussed some during the preliminary review, I believe that a key issue about the project is the size, footprint, height, and potential visibility from Route 4 and Route 108/Dover Road. The Planning Board will want to evaluate this issue carefully during the review so that the board and the public are very clear about how the project will appear from these two Town gateways after it is completed. The top of the existing ridge on the site will be cut down about 18 feet. While the applicant submitted some sketches showing potential views of the site we will want to coordinate carefully with the applicant and their engineer and architect to provide precise likely views in the wintertime from a number of vantage points.

- 11) Retaining wall. There will be a significant retaining wall on several sides of the building, including on the Route 4 and Dover Road sides. The applicant has an intensive landscaping and planting plan and will have a planting easement on the adjacent marketing center property on Dover Road. The highest point of the retaining wall above grade on the Route 4 side will be about 16 feet and on the Dover Road side around 13 feet. We would like to see a profile rendering of the wall along these two sides.

- 12) Building height. The maximum building height in the OR zone is 50 feet or 75 feet at the reasonable discretion of the Planning Board. Building height is defined in the zoning ordinance as: *The vertical distance from the mean grade elevation (average grade around the perimeter of the building) to the mean roof elevation [one-half (1/2) of the vertical distance from eave to ridge]*. According to the applicant the building will be about 57 feet high. There will be different grades around the building, different floor elevations, and various stories around the building so we will want to be clear about these parameters.

- 13) Architecture. The Town does not have purview over architectural design in the OR zone. However, the design of the building is very important, particularly given how prominent it will be at this location. We have asked the applicant if they would be willing to meet with an ad hoc architectural subcommittee should the Planning Board establish one. The committee could provide nonbinding comments to the Planning Board and applicant. A committee was established for Madbury Commons, for example, and provided much value added in terms of design quality resulting from discussions with the applicant and reporting back to the Planning Board. I spoke with Sharon Somers who said the applicant would be willing to meet with a committee after the first public hearing. The applicant would then take the comments and decide whether to incorporate comments. I would hope that a first meeting would be sufficiently productive that the applicant might be willing to meet again after the first meeting if that would be useful. While I think that the designs submitted so far are quite attractive, I believe that working with a committee the applicant could enhance the designs further.

Other Issues

- 14) Energy Checklist. At the appropriate time we will meet with the applicant.
- 15) Traffic study. A traffic study has been submitted.
- 16) Circulation. We will provide comments on the on-site traffic circulation plan later.
- 17) Landscaping. The project includes a generous landscaping plan. We will provide comments later.
- 18) Recycling. For a project of this scope it would be useful to obtain a detailed recycling plan and input from the Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee.
- 19) Water service. The plans show the extension of water service. Existing lines are located around 1,100 feet from Stone Quarry Drive. The TRG discussed looping the water line around the site and including a third hydrant at the rear.
- 20) Sewer service. Sewer is located around 2,050 feet from Stone Quarry Drive. It will run cross country across the Marketing Center lot. The Town prefers to own and maintain even the portion located on that other lot. The applicant would need to provide an easement to the Town.
- 21) Construction management plan. We will probably ask for a more detailed construction management plan later. There will likely be blasting. The applicant plans to do a sonar study for a more detailed picture of the soils.
- 22) More detailed review. I will provide a more detailed review for the August 23 meeting.