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Subject: Gerrish Road comments
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October 16, 2022

To Michael Behrendt and the Durham Planning Board:

I haven't been on any of the official or unofficial site walks of the Mulhern property, but I am familiar with the Gerrish Drive/ Ambler Road neighborhood, including the strip of land which is shown on most maps as Gerrish Drive Extension. (The Mulherns' site engineer Michael Sievert renamed it "Ryder Way" on maps he submitted in advance of the October 26, 2022 public hearing, but neither he nor the Mulherns have any authority to rename streets, even "paper streets.") This strip of land is mostly wetland, aside from a small portion which forms the beginning of Gail Kelley's driveway. In its current form, Gerrish Drive Extension would obviously be totally unsuitable for use as a public roadway. It is however still a valuable piece of public property. By the way, I am also opposed to renaming the extension "Ryder Way" or anything other than "Gerrish Drive."

The Mulherns have offered to accept the property, basically for free, aside from the (considerable) cost of building the road. Mr. Sievert and his colleagues have worked very hard on a site plan. That site plan involves building the road as cheaply as possible, draining the adjacent wetlands (apparently) through an eight foot wide culvert. The site could theoretically be crossed with a bridge, which would be much more expensive, but would allow for the maximum wetland drainage. The Mulhern/Sievert plan also expects Ms. Kelley to have her driveway moved and the drainage from her land to be severely altered, for no compensation. Understandably, she likes her beautiful home just fine just the way it has been since she moved there many years ago, and she is not eager to have it changed (probably not for the better) to accommodate a project she derives no benefit from. Her existing driveway is reasonably flat and takes the shortest possible route from her house to Gerrish Drive.

Others have mentioned the theoretical possibility of accessing the proposed development from Bagdad Road. Judging from the maps and my very few and very brief past visits to the Mulhern property (while "door knocking" before elections) this would involve building the access road along the Mulherns' own driveway. That driveway is very close to their own house, as well as their next door neighbor's house (which used to be the Mulherns' own house.) The Mulherns' driveway is reasonably flat and takes the shortest possible route from their house to Bagdad Road. I can understand why the Mulherns don't want an access road running through their dooryard, but they will at least benefit from the proposed subdivision.

An even more theoretical possibility would be to build an access road to Route 108: there is an existing easement which runs just north of the Madbury-Durham town line. I do understand, however, that the Gerrish

Drive Extension route is the only access route mentioned in the application.

If the development gets built, the Mulherns will not benefit as much as they hoped at the outset of the project. They have already sunk 2 or 3 years of their life and a lot of money into this, which is unfortunate. But speaking just as one average concerned citizen, accessing the proposed development site through Gerrish Drive Extension is simply not practical, and that is reason enough to reject the current application.

Speaking as a average citizen who has served seven terms in the New Hampshire House (hopefully eight terms, after the upcoming election) I will say that I understand there is a lot of pressure on planning boards to approve every project they are presented with. That pressure will only intensify in the coming years. This project would provide approximately 18 units of (taxable) housing at a time when all forms of housing are in short supply. And even though the plans are far from complete, I can see that this is a well-thought-out project. That said, it looks like this will end up being a market-rate age-restricted 55-and-over development, which is not a terrible idea per se, but the greatest need is, and will continue to be, for affordable work force housing.

Thanks,

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