

Technical Review Group (TRG)
Tuesday, January 14, 2025
Town Council Chambers
NOTES OF MEETING

Riverwoods – Phase II. Preliminary Application

TRG members present:

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner
Audrey Cline, Building Official
Rene Kelley, Police Chief
Brendan O’Sullivan, Deputy Fire Chief
Todd Selig, Town Administrator
April Talon, Town Engineer

Applicants present:

Natalie Belanger, Executive Director, Riverwoods Durham
Pat O’Keefe, Director of Capital Projects, Riverwoods
Erik Saari, Altus Engineering
Chris Boldt, Attorney, Donahue, Tucker, and Ciandella

Mr. Saari explained the project. There will be two residential buildings for senior housing. There will be some housing for students. Mr. Saari said having a little bit of a mix is beneficial. Mr. Boldt said senior housing requires that at least 80% of the units be occupied by at least one person 55 or older so that would leave 20% of the units available for other people. Mr. Boldt said they might be graduate students. Mr. Saari said they would need a variance for the location of buildings and parking lots in the wetland buffer.

There would be a maintenance building and a community center. They would extend water and sewer. They may or may not extend it to the maintenance building. April said they will need to do a water impact study.

There is a tight curve in the road. Riverwoods is talking with DPW about creating a larger radius. This would allow trucks to maintain a higher speed, reducing some of the noise from trucks breaking and accelerating. It would require a land swap with the Town. There is also concern though that enlarging the radius would increase speed. Other people use the road who visit Public Works. April said the trucks sometimes operate 24 hours per day.

151 parking spaces are proposed. This is more than the Town requirements. It would be about 2 cars per unit.

There was discussion about possibly rotating or moving the buildings to try to reduce the wetland encroachments. It might make sense to move them forward with less wetland buffer impact but a variance would still be required and one would then be required for encroachment into front setbacks, though that might have less impact than encroachment into the buffers.

It was discussed whether Phase II would be subject to full taxes or a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT). Riverwoods currently makes a PILOT. On the one hand the new buildings are independent units. On the other hand, the units are part of Riverwoods. Staff will meet with the applicant at the appropriate time to discuss this issue. Related to that is the question of how Phase II is classified. Senior housing is allowed by conditional use. A senior care facility (how the rest of Riverwoods is classified) is allowed by right. With the former classification the use would probably be taxable. With the latter classification it would probably be subject to a PILOT.

April said we would like to reduce on street parking. Mr. Saari said they could build more parking with Phase II but it would affect the wetland buffer more. April said there are sometimes a dozen cars parking in the road. Mr. Saari said this is probably employees smoking because they can't smoke on site. Ms. Belanger said they will make sure that employees do not do this.

April said we would like to see the sidewalk extended. She questioned the proximity of the garage to DPW, asking if it could be moved to the north. Mr. Saari said they will look into this.

April said they will need a third party review of the stormwater when the formal application comes in.

Mr. Saari said they will provide a traffic study with the formal application. April said it is not ideal having a driveway for the site located on the curve of the road. Mr. Saari said that sight distance there is okay.

Todd said it is not ideal having a swale next to the sidewalk. He said this can end up not looking attractive if it is not very well maintained. We would like for a campus-like feel. He suggested planting some shade trees along the road. Mr.

Saari said if they include a swale the sidewalk could be on Riverwoods property. If there is a curb it would be in the Town's right of way. The existing sidewalk is partly on Riverwoods property and partly in the Town's right of way. The new sidewalk on the plans is on Riverwoods property.

Michael suggested adding some color to the new buildings. Mr. Saari said they will speak with the architect about this.

Mr. Saari said the existing trail would be connected to the end of the sidewalk running along the parking lot. The sidewalk would be six feet wide.

There will be a garage on the first floor of the buildings but it will be completely enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Behrendt, Durham Town Planner/TRG Chair