

5.01: Public Hearing: Preliminary plat and Zoning Amendment for Covenant Meadows (Project #17-102); Case of Eric Thomsen.

Public Hearing

Chairperson Bauer called the public hearing to order at 7:01 p.m.

Presentation

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report stating the purpose of this case is to review an application for a Rezoning of the Subject Project from R-1 Rural Developing to Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Preliminary Plat. The site is generally located south of Trott Brook and west of Germanium Street and is identified as PID 02-32-25-44-0004. The Applicant has proposed to subdivide the approximately thirty-eight (38) acre Subject Property into twelve (12) single family homes that would be serviced by individual private utilities. The Preliminary Plat proposes deeding approximately fifteen (15) of the thirty-eight (38) acres to the City as the public benefit in relation to the PUD application. The proposed fifteen (15) acres straddles both sides of the Trott Brook, has steep slopes, and is also considered to be high quality natural open space. Staff reviewed the request in further detail along with the alternatives available to the Commission.

Citizen Input

Chairperson Bauer requested further clarification on where the pedestrian pathway was located and asked if it would connect to Trott Brook.

City Planner Anderson described the location of the trail easement that would be deeded to the City within the proposed development. He explained the steep slopes would not allow for an ADA trail. It was noted the trail would have a dead-end. Further discussion ensued regarding the specific standards for ADA trails.

Chairperson Bauer questioned if the cul-de-sac could be altered in any way to assist with better fire access.

Community Development Director Gladhill reported this was not the case and noted there was a broader neighborhood issue given the fact it only had a single access point.

Commissioner VanScoy inquired what the status was of the east/west cul-de-sac.

City Planner Anderson indicated the east/west cul-de-sac would be signed as a potential thru street but would be designed to meet full cul-de-sac standards.

Commissioner Anderson expressed concern that this neighborhood would have a single-point of entry.

Eric Thomsen, 6210 Green Valley Road, stated he has tried to make this development neighborhood friendly. He appreciated the assistance he has received from staff and thanked them for the thorough report.

Dan McShane, 17310 Geranium Street, reported he has lived at his address for the past 20 years and he appreciated the wildlife and trees. He feared how the new development would impact the wildlife population.

Terry McShane, 17310 Geranium Street, expressed concern with how the new development would impact the turkeys and deer behind her home. She did not approve of the tranquility being destroyed behind her property. She requested a sanctuary or buffer area be preserved for the wildlife.

Mr. McShane stated he would support the developer constructing nine houses instead of twelve. He asked how many of the lots were a single acre.

City Planner Anderson reviewed the lot sizes for the proposed development, along with the lot sizes of the adjacent properties.

Commissioner VanScoy discussed the purpose of a PUD noting the City would be receiving 15 acres from the developer. He explained the developer could be constructing 15 homes and was proposing 12.

Mr. McShane further commented on how the additional homes would impact the single point of entry to the neighborhood. He asked if any of the proposed homes would be low-income.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated this was not the intent of this project and explained the City does not determine housing prices. He understood the developer had not applied for any funding assistance. He clarified that the developer was proposing single-family homes and not duplexes.

Mark Ladean, 17330 Germanium Street, expressed concern with the added traffic that would be added to his neighborhood with only a single point of entry. He was also concerned with how water would drain off the new homes onto his property given the grade differences between the parcels. He understood new wells would be installed and feared how the water table would be impacted. He stated he moved to this neighborhood for the peace and quiet and it was his hope the trees, wildlife, deer and turkeys would remain.

Julie Ladean, 17330 Germanium Street, stated she was concerned with how difficult it was to access the creek in the spring and during large rain events. She believed it was a complete waste of tax dollars to construct a trail that would need constant repairs. She questioned if it was the developer's idea to provide land to the City. She explained that the 15 acres that would be turned over to the City were not buildable and could not be used as a park. While she understood these 38 acres would eventually be built on, it was her hope that her view of the creek would be maintained and that strangers would not be walking through her property in order to get to the creek.

Chairperson Bauer questioned how the width of Trott Brook varied during heavy rain events or wet springs.

Ms. Ladean explained Trott Brook was normally 12 to 20 feet in width but could reach up to 500 feet in width during the spring.

Len Simon, 17349 St. Francis Boulevard, stated he owns 40 acres directly west of this proposed property. He commented on the history of his property and noted he had a natural amphitheater. He explained he purchased his property to preserve the amphitheater, which required the combining of four lots. He recommended the City maintain the 2.5-acre minimum for the lot sizes to ensure septic waste does not seep from one property to another. He believed this property was a gift from God and should be preserved.

Juliann Simon, 17349 St. Francis Boulevard, shared the sentiments of the others who spoke previously. She expressed concern with the amount of traffic that would have to be accessing Highway 47 from a single access point. She understood the concerns that were raised by the Fire Department and cautioned the future homeowners on this. She encouraged the City to further investigate this development prior to approval.

Diane Weber, 5450 173rd Avenue NW, stated she appreciated her secluded neighborhood and appreciated the 2.5 to 3-acre lot size minimum. She requested the City hold the proposed development to these standards. She questioned who would be using the proposed trail. She worried about the number of new wells and septic systems that would be installed given the small lot size. She asked that the neighbors be made aware if low-income housing was being constructed. Lastly, she expressed concern with the water runoff from the new development and feared how it would impact the creek and river.

Chairperson Bauer discussed the approval process for this Planning Case and noted it was in proposal phase and the final approval would rest with the City Council.

Mr. Simon suggested this piece of property be preserved and that a monumental act be taken.

David Magnuson, 13907 Bluebird Street in Andover, stated he was interested in building in Covenant Meadows. He discussed the history of the proposed development and explained the dream was for several friends to be able to build homes and live among their friends. He loved the nature surrounding this property. He reported the land would not be clear cut or stripped. His goal would be to do life with friends while allowing the natural beauty of the land to remain. He stated if the City did not approve this proposal, he would have to pursue another parcel of land.

Chairperson Bauer thanked Mr. Magnuson for this information.

Tim O'Shaughnessy, 17201 St. Francis Boulevard, stated he owns 37 acres along the south side of the proposed development. He reported he was new to the City of Ramsey. He suggested the development allow seven homes and not eight. He recommended that the 15 acres not become a public park.

Don Qveton, 5750 177th Avenue NW, discussed the flooding on this property and explained that during wet springs and winters, he has to move his cattle. He agreed that it would be a waste of money to put in a trail as it would routinely flood. He understood this was a beautiful piece of property and appreciated the sentiment behind the development. He understood the property would develop someday. However, he offered to purchase the 15 acre outlot, after receiving an appraisal, and indicated he could donate it back to the City if he ever sells his property. He explained that he bought his land so that he could live in the country, same as all the other neighbors.

Dave Jones, 17331 Germanium Street, commented on the cliffs surrounding his house and stated he would never allow a path in this area. He expressed concern with the water runoff in his neighborhood because of the steep slopes and cliffs. He stated if this development were to proceed the water runoff would have to be addressed. He noted he has lived at his home for the past 17 years.

Chairperson Bauer discussed the PUD that would allow lots less than two acres in size. He asked how several of the lots to the east were approved at less than 2.5 acres.

City Planner Anderson anticipated these lots were developed prior to this standard being put in place and were now lawful non-conforming lots.

Mr. Thomsen explained the entire development would be privately financed and all single-family homes were being proposed. He stated he was not an engineer but noted the property would be engineered properly for water runoff and infiltration.

Community Development Director Gladhill understood the neighbors were very concerned with the protection of the natural resources. This led the City to propose protecting 15 acres of land surrounding Trott Brook through a PUD. He stated his primary intent was to lock the property into its natural state. He explained if the trail was not seen as a benefit, the City would not have to pursue it. He reported the 15 acres would have to be deeded over to the City in order for the PUD process to be considered. He provided further comment on how the engineering of this site was reviewed and addressed by City staff. He discussed how traffic would enter and exit the neighborhood noting only 120 extra trips per day would be generated by the new homes. Staff provided further comment on the financing plan for the project and noted the City would be securing sureties from the developer.

Commissioner Anderson understood this was a property with solitude. He discussed the cliffs within the neighborhood and questioned what the City would do with the 15 acre outlot.

Commissioner VanScoy questioned how the wildlife would be impacted through the proposed development.

Mr. Thomsen commented on the protection of the 15 acres stated this was being done to assist with preservation. He explained he was 56 years old and has lived in Ramsey the majority of his life. He discussed the proposed site plan further and stated a natural corridor would be maintained

for the wildlife. He indicated his goal was to maintain as many trees as possible and noted new trees would be planted.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if any if the new homeowners would be installing fences.

Mr. Thomsen stated he was uncertain if fences would be installed.

Chairperson Bauer discussed the PUD approval process and noted the plans, once approved, could not be altered.

Mr. McShane questioned how far a home within the new development would be from his.

City Planner Anderson estimated a new home would be roughly 250 feet from Mr. McShane's home.

Motion by Commissioner VanScoy, seconded by Commissioner Surma, to close the public hearing.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Bauer, Commissioners VanScoy, Surma, Anderson, Brauer, and Nosan. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

Chairperson Bauer closed the public hearing closed at 8:28 p.m.

Commission Business

Commissioner VanScoy requested further information from staff regarding the City's septic system regulations.

Community Development Director Gladhill discussed the MPCA and City's septic system requirements.

Commissioner VanScoy questioned what the City's minimum lots size standards were.

Community Development Director Gladhill explained lots with septic systems were to have enough room for a primary and secondary septic. This allows for a system to fail on a residential lot and still be replaced.

Commissioner Nosan believed there was no purpose in putting in a trail as this area frequently floods. She discussed the single access point to this neighborhood and requested further information.

Community Development Director Gladhill discussed the single access point and stated staff would be conducting additional study on a potential second access point.

Commissioner Brauer questioned if an EAW should be completed.

City Planner Anderson explained the proposed development would not trigger this requirement. He discussed how the neighbors could petition for an EAW. He indicated the development would have to meet all Rum River Watershed District requirements with regard to stormwater runoff.

Commissioner Nosan asked if this property could have any endangered species, such as turtles.

Community Development Director Gladhill understood the City could order an animal species database from the DNR. He explained a blanding turtle might exist in the general area of Ramsey but stated this had not stopped other projects in the area.

Ms. McShane questioned how an EAW process could be started.

Community Development Director Gladhill discussed the citizen petition process for an EAW. He commented further on the eight step requirements within the EAW. He stated he could email all of this information to Ms. McShane.

Commissioner Surma thanked all of the residents for being in attendance this evening. He appreciated their input and Mr. Simon's passion for this property. He stated he supported property rights and wanted to see all lots within the development be 2.5 acres in size. He supported the land surrounding Trott Brook being preserved.

Community Development Director Gladhill appreciated all of the comments received this evening as well. He recommended action on this development be delayed to allow several issues to be worked through with the developer that do not include an EAW. He stated Mr. Thomsen has been excellent to work with and staff would like the Commission to table action on Covenant Meadows to April.

Motion by Commissioner VanScoy, seconded by Commissioner Nosan, to table action on Covenant Meadows to the April 6, 2017 Planning Commission meeting.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Bauer, Commissioners VanScoy, Nosan, Anderson, Brauer, and Surma. Voting No: None. Absent: None.