

To: Hinesburg DRB
From: Hinesburg Conservation Commission
RE: Windy Ridge sketch plan

October 1, 2023

The Hinesburg Conservation Commission (HCC) reviewed the Windy Ridge sketch plan at its September 28, 2023 meeting. We request additional information from the applicant, and have concerns with the application including stream buffer areas, wetlands, stormwater, and rare species, among other topics.

Section 2.5.1 (Stream Setbacks) requires that streams within Village Growth Area zoning districts shall have setbacks as shown on the Village Growth Area Stream Setback/Buffer Map (copy attached). As shown on that map, the undeveloped area identified as the wetlands in the sketchplan has a 75' setback. The sketch plan provides for a 50' setback/buffer area. Houses on the sketchplan are in very close proximity to the 50' buffer and a roadway encroaches on the 50' buffer for the smaller wetland. The Hinesburg Conservation Commission is concerned that this headwater stream (which feeds the LaPlatte River) will not have its water quality and stream values protected with a 50 foot buffer, and that having houses so close to the stream buffer will become a problem (when landowners begin to mow or disturb the buffer - note Section 2.5.2 which states that creation of new lawn areas within stream buffers is not permitted). We also note that this stream and Windy Ridge are within the Source Water Protection Area.

The HCC is concerned about wetlands, and would like the applicant to clarify which areas have been delineated by a wetlands scientist, and to provide those delineations. There is an area near the multi-family rental units (directly south of NRG) that has a stretch of Covington silty clay (Cv) soils that can be indicative of wetlands. In addition, wetland B is being impacted heavily by this development. Wetlands are a natural solution to absorb and hold water, minimize downstream flooding, and clean up water. The HCC strongly encourages the applicant to minimize impact on wetland B by removing a unit and/or moving the road.

Regarding stormwater, the HCC is concerned that this plan may not meet section 5.27.2 (Stormwater Control), in that post-development drainage patterns will not mimic or improve upon pre-development drainage patterns. As currently designed, it seems that some stormwater is shuttled to the west, whereas normally it would likely flow into the stream/wetland A. The HCC would also like to see discussion of the tree cells that are proposed – their design life, percent removal of nutrients, etc.

The HCC would like to have the applicant clarify if a plant biologist has been to the area. Rare, threatened, and endangered plant species have been identified within 1 mile of the site. In addition, rare shrubland birds (Golden- and Blue-winged Warblers) have been identified using this area in the past, and the HCC encourages the Applicant to check with Mark LaBarr of Audubon Vermont regarding these plans and the best ways for them to thrive.

The HCC is concerned about steep slopes; we hope the Applicant will minimize impacts on steep slopes, in particular near units marked 403-407.

We would like to have the Applicant clarify what will happen with the rest of the lots in this area (lot 2 at top of hill, and the remainder of lot 1). Is this a master plan for all of these lots? It is also unclear to the HCC what is included in the housing unit target of 99 units in the staff report. Is it the full extent of the

lot which wraps around the NRG building, most of which is steep slopes and/or wetlands, but is not included in the site plan drawings provided in the application?

As noted in the DRB Staff Report, there are discrepancies between the project narrative and the sketchplans. Some comments in the narrative, such as the reference to a septic system, we assume are outdated but would like confirmation that the sketchplan reflects the current proposal.

Although outside our scope, we are concerned about the space between the road at the south end of the rental units and Route 116, and between the western edge of the development and CVU Road. Is there adequate space here for the road right-of-way and a roadside swale? Will traffic driving internally within this development shine headlights onto Route 116 or CVU Road and confuse traffic?

We additionally hope there will be assurances that what is proposed (affordable housing / daycare center) will be built. Without these assurances, the development could have avoided Act 250 review, then not built the affordable housing required to qualify. Perhaps the Applicant could be required to build the affordable housing before the rest of the development.

Thank you for your time reviewing this proposal.

Kate Kelly, Chair

On behalf of the Hinesburg Conservation Commission