

**Town of Middlebury- Development Review Board (DRB)
Meeting/Hearing conducted in person and via Zoom
Minutes of March 13, 2023**

Draft

Members Present: David Hamilton, Chair, Gary Baker, Vegar Boe, Jason Larocque (Alt.) Kevin Newton, Michael Reeves and Mark Wilch

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Jennifer Murray and David Wetmore

Others Present: Zeke Davisson, Tom Getz, Andy Miller, Charles Brush, Susan Davis, Steven Ralph, Elise Schanbacher, Magna Dodge and Jef Bratspis

MEETING AGENDA

I. Call to Order- David Hamilton, DRB Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Chair assisted staff to determine participants, reviewed tonight’s agenda.

II. Approval of minutes-

Motion by Gary Baker- moved to approve the minutes of 2/27/2023 as presented, 2nd by Mike Reeves. Discussion- None, **Motion to approve, 5 yes, 0 no, Vegar Boe and Jason Larocque** abstained.

III. Public comments- None expressed.

IV. Public Hearing- No hearing scheduled

V. Other business

1. Sketch Plan Review- Summit Properties

This Sketch Plan Review is being conducted pursuant to Section 561. This is the first step in the DRB’s review of the Summit project. Staff posted the DRB agenda as required by VT Law. It is an informal opportunity for Summit Properties to introduce the DRB to their project. Pursuant to Section 561 the DRB may offer comments/observations related to the project’s compliance with the Towns Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. No binding decisions will be made during Sketch Plan review.

David Hamilton (DH)- opened the meeting and review of Summit Properties Sketch Plan by asking if any DRB members had conflicts or ex parti communications to disclose. David Hamilton shared that he has taught Middlebury College classes in the past and that he had advocated for Middlebury College efforts for affordable and work force housing. He ceased active participation in the Colleges initiatives when he foresaw possible conflicts as a DRB member.

DH- observed that the recent zoning amendments has really allowed for the Summit project named “Stonecrop Meadows” to move forward and invited Zeke Davisson to present their project.

Zeke Davisson (ZD)- echoed the comments by DH. Zeke shared that he and his team partners Tom Getz, Andy Miller and Charles Brush are excited about this project. Summit manages 1100 residential units in upstate NY, VT and NH. Summit Properties (SP) and the College has partnered on the proposed Stonecrop Meadows (SCM) project, citing the need for affordable and workforce housing. SP has an

option agreement for lot #3. The development is proposed on the 32+/- acre parcel identified as lot #3 of the College's recent subdivision. The project is designed as compact smart housing. Zeke expressed that SCM is an extension of Buttolph Acres and the 5 corners developed areas and is within walking distance to amenities, schools and services around Middlebury. SP is discussing public transportation options with Tri Valley Transit. The Towns water distribution system extends across the property and sewer is located close by. The existing water line through the property will likely need to be upgraded. The SCM project is also located close to the "Trail Around Middlebury", Means and Battell Woods and other developed recreational areas in the Buttolph Acres neighborhood.

Zeke expressed what most are aware of, that Vermont has a housing crisis, stating that VT's jobs to homes ratio is the 5th highest in the Country. New York provides much of the affordable housing for Middlebury and many people employed in the Middlebury workforce are required to travel to reach their job sites. Just today SP received \$6 million from a VFHA grant for up to 35 homes that will be marketed to homeowners making up to 120% of area median income (homes ranging between \$291,000 and \$335,000). A great deal of money is being infused into affordable housing and home ownership programs.

Project description-

Zeke outlined the 3-lot subdivision of the College property and the wetlands and wetlands buffer areas. Zapota Courage (State Wetlands Coordinator) has visited the site. Zeke expressed that Middlebury's new amended Zoning encourages different types of housing. He shared pictures of the mixed housing types that SCM will include. Zeke explained that there are 2 versions of the SCM project currently circulating. The most recent renderings were distributed last Friday. Staff emailed them to DRB last Friday and hard copies are available tonight. The updated design was based on comments SP received, citing this design reduces primary road infrastructure, orients homes and buildings to the street and locates larger building further from the view of Seminary Street Ext. The goal is to make the development feel like an extension of Middlebury. SP hopes to break ground sometime in late fall 2023 (optimistic) or early spring 2024.

DRB comments/questions.

Kevin Newton (KN)- asked about housing types and layouts. Zeke went over the types of mixed housing shown on their sketch plan. Ranges from duplex homes owned by individuals to multi-family rentals. The largest 62 unit building would be for elderly housing. The duplexes proposed along Seminary Street Ext. are gateways to the SCM project and will front /face Seminary Street Ext. Parking would be a mix of individual garages, underground and above ground parking. SP are trying to remain flexible. Zeke outlined the location of the Towns waterline easement and GMP line right-of-way (ROW). Project phases are anticipated to be.

Phase 1- Infrastructure development and VFHA affordable housing within the interior quad area.

Phase 2- Multi-family rentals – ACCT will partner on some multi-family units.

Phase 3 -Gets more speculative. Wetland crossing permit will be required for elderly housing unit. The goal is to use the parcels as compactly and densely as possible and in compliance with the Towns Zoning. Other structures will be a combination of market rate owned and rental units.

Zeke- The ideal mix of housing would 25% owned affordable units, 25% affordable rental units, 25% owned market rate units and 25% market rate rental units. At this time, it is difficult to anticipate what the final mix will be. We know the VFHA grant will allow SP to develop 35 affordable units. Beyond that it depends on financing.

DH- What is the overall density allowed for the 32 acres. Zeke said based on the R-20 zoning upwards of 700 residential units. SP is proposing 200 +/- units. Development of this parcel will avoid further sprawl.

Mike Reeves (MR)- asked about traffic concerns related to the 5 corners and through the Buttolph Acres development. Zeke responded that all traffic from SCM will access Seminary Street Ext. either east or west. A traffic study is being planned. The access points on Seminary Street Ext. are the result of line of sight and fire safety requirements. There is no access to Washington Street through lot #2 due to wetlands. SP recognizes that traffic is a big concern. Zeke reiterated that parking within the development will be a combination of individual garages, on parcel parking, underground parking beneath multi-family units, minor above ground and on-street parking. Zeke acknowledges that on-street parking requires further discussion given current Town policies regarding on-street parking.

DH- asked about anticipated school children population from SCM. Zeke responded that it is commonly around 15% of the developments total population. Given the mix of housing types he anticipates it would be around 30 children. DH expressed that this number will need to be confirmed and the schools need to review their ability to serve.

Vegar Boe (VB)- do you anticipate that this will draw residents from NY? Quite possibly. What this project will do is open up the availability of housing stock, either existing or new. It is anticipated that some people will desire to move closer to their work. This was confirmed in an ACCT workforce housing study. SCM will provide a mix of housing between 1200- 1700 sq. ft., which will appeal to all age classes.

DH- what type of waivers and accommodations is SP requesting.

1. TND Regulations are very proscriptive relative to lot size requirements (6,000sf and 20,000sf). SP hopes they can receive approval for smaller lots.

2. Setbacks waivers

3. Lot coverage waivers

4. Frontage

5. Design standards

DH- noted that SP will need to be clear about these requests and the DRB will need to carefully weight their request in light of the Regulations.

DH- how will SP direct or control design standards? Zeke responded that an HOA will be required. SP will develop principals to harmonize designs. That said they want to encourage a variety of designs.

Gary Baker (GB)- asked about sidewalks. Zeke noted that they are shown on the sketch plan but somewhat difficult to see. Zoning will require a 60-ft. ROW which will allow for sidewalk placement and vehicle corridors along primary streets throughout the SCM development.

Mark Wilch (MW)- asked about visitor parking accommodations. Zeke responded that is an ongoing discussion, it will likely include access to on-street parking. SP understands this is a problem right now, but they hope to develop a parking management practice that the Town will support.

Jen Murray (JM)- asked about traffic circulation behind the west buildings. Zeke expressed access satisfies requirements for a 2nd fire access and allows for parking underneath the multi-unit buildings. Zeke went on to describe where the plans would call for a primary and secondary access street/roads.

DH- expressed that SP's economic plan depends on the Town acceptance of some infrastructure, what would that be? Zeke stated, at least water and sewer and primary road infrastructure. SP would build and pay for the infrastructure. HOA agreements and the maintenance agreed to under the HOA is costly to homeowners and residents. To the extent that the Town can assume responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance, once infrastructure is complete, it will help to keep it affordable for the residents of the development.

DH- asked about the timeline needed to develop an agreement with the Town relative to acceptance of infrastructure? Unsure, Town will likely ask for a cost benefit analysis before committing.

MR- how are the units maintained over the long term as "affordable". VHFA has covenants to ensure that the units remain affordable. Ownership vs. rentals are treated differently.

GB- asked about HOA. The complexities related to the HOA will be determined once the Town has decided what part of the projects infrastructure they are willing to accept. It is assumed that the HOA would include stormwater, parks, roofs, exterior color schemes, etc. The unknowns are sidewalks and extent of street systems.

Zeke- expressed that they have engaged a civil engineer to determine stormwater compliance requirements. That work will determine the final layout of building placement, streets and other infrastructure. SP will have a better understanding of the stormwater needs in the coming weeks.

Dave Wetmore (DW)- asked about greenspace requirements. Zeke stated that gardens and park areas are planned. Trails as required in the TND, needs further discussion. The project is located close to the TAM, Means and Battell Woods.

DH- asked about offsite needs. Zeke expressed that the additional traffic, pedestrian and vehicular will require reduce speeds and traffic calming mitigation efforts on Seminary Street Ext. A cross walk is required to gain access to the existing sidewalk on the south side of Seminary Street. Discussion of sidewalk extensions along the north side of Seminary Street and also Valley View are being considered. Valley View and then through Buttolph Acres is thought to be the likely preferred path to school for children.

DH- opened the meeting to public comment and asked people to direct comment to the DRB and not applicant.

Steven Ralph- expressed concern that the intersection of Valley View does not line up with either entrance into the SCM project.

Elise Schanbacher- expressed support and excitement for the project and hopes it moves forward.

DH- No further public comments.

DH- asked SP why, one of the developments streets don't intersect with Valley View. Zeke expressed that Valley View does not have great sight lines. The SCM project requires 2 entrances onto Seminary Street. Existing wetlands limit where the developments streets can be located. Both entrances need to have good sight lines and should not be on top of each other. DRB expressed concern about traffic using three side streets within a very short distance.

JM- expressed that most aspects of the SP design are interchangeable. However, stormwater likely will determine where final layout of streets and building placement will be. Zeke expressed that he hopes that their engineer can make progress over the next couple of weeks on stormwater infrastructure.

Motion by Gary Baker- I move to continue the sketch plan review of Stonecrop Meadows project by Summit Properties to March 27. 2nd by Mark Wilch. Dave Wetmore expressed that the DRB has another public hearing scheduled and that SP would be the second item of business. DRB approved the continuation of the SCM Sketch Plan review 7-yes, 0-no.

2. Next DRB meeting will be March 27, 2023. Agenda includes an application request by David and Robin Cole for amended Site Plan and Setback Waiver approval.

VI. Adjournment

Motion by Mike Reeves, moved to adjourn at 8:45 PM, 2nd by Vegar Boe. Motion approved 7- yes, 0-no. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Minutes submitted by Dave Wetmore