



MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission – Ann Arbor
Matt Kowalski – Ann Arbor City Planner

FROM: Tom Covert

RE: South Pond Village – Site Plan w/ Access to Huron River Drive

DATE: February 17, 2016

We have had the opportunity to review the staff report that is before the Planning Commission this evening. There are a number of items that the developer and design team take exception. These items are as follows.

Storm Water Facilities

Staff report states that the design will infiltrate the full 100-year storm event. This is not correct. There was only one area of the site that had soils suitable for infiltration pursuant to the City and County standards. This area is the area where we have designed the smaller North Basin. This North Basin infiltrates about 5% of the total site's stormwater runoff.

Natural Features

This site plan with the reconfigured connection point to Huron River Drive does impact natural features as defined by the City zoning ordinance. We have not taken this lightly, and have studied multiple opportunities to minimize impacts to natural features with the road alignment as proposed. Our **wetland impact with this design is at 0.33 acres**. With this impact we are proposing mitigation in the form of enhancements and management of the remaining wetland, and **would agree to preserve this area by way of conservation easement or dedication to the City of 8.35 acres**.

The area of the impact **does not include the areas as noted as preferred habitat for the Dukes Skipper**. The project's natural features consultant King and MacGregor has employed the Michigan Natural Features Inventory and their staff who along with KME has identified areas of potential Duke's Skipper habitat. In their report they state:

"Habitat Suitability for Dukes' skipper was extremely limited at the site. Suitable habitat included a small pocket of open wet meadow approximately 1/2 acre in size, and another pocket of wet meadow approximately 1/2 acre in size...."

No Dukes' skipper adults were observed during the surveys in 2015. Four (4) voucher specimens were collected in the largest patch of lake sedge in the northernmost patch of wet meadow. All collected specimens were identified as broad-winged skippers (Poanes viator), a species commonly

found in similar habitat (Glassberg 1999). An expert in lepidopteran species identification at MNFI examined each voucher specimen and confirmed they were broad-winged skippers (Cuthrell pers comm 2015).

Other than the two small patches of southern wet meadow, the site does not appear suitable for Dukes' skippers."

The area of the proposed road alignment does include trees that will be removed. We are proposing the ***mitigation of the trees that are impacted pursuant to City Ordinance.***

Floodplains

As noted above, we did take great care in evaluating routes for the road alignment to Huron River Drive and as a part of this evaluation we also looked to limit impacts to the floodplain as well. We selected the proposed alignment due to the minimal amount of impacts.

Not mentioned in the report is with this design ***we are mitigating floodplain impacts with an equivalent compensatory cut (1:1 ratio)***. This area will be planted with wetland seed mix, and will also serve as additional wetland (3:1 provision ratio) in addition to the wetland preservation mentioned earlier. ***This floodplain mitigation area will, over time, become part of the on-site wetland*** with this project. Further, we have performed SWMM analyses and determined that the project would have no negative impact on flooding conditions.

Traffic and Access

Plans have been reviewed by WCRC and pursuant to their review of February 3, 2016, ***the design meets their location and geometric standards and is acceptable.*** They did note that there are mitigation measures that would be required at Hogback and Huron River Drive. They noted to us that as the plan develops through detailed engineering that these mitigation measures could be reviewed and agreed upon. Mitigation measures could likely consist of a turn lane extension on northbound and southbound Hogback, with signal timing adjustments, or contribution to these measures being implemented in the future.

Mitigation at Huron River Drive and Huron Parkway consists of extending the westbound right-turn lane and traffic signal retiming in order to accommodate existing right-turn backup queue lengths. This intersection is within the City and any improvements will need to comply with City design requirements.

This current plan has two access points, with access to two separate roadways, Chalmers and Huron River Drive. This is by direct connection to Huron River Drive and connection to Algebe Way which then outlets to Chalmers Road. This is seen as a benefit for both Woodcreek and South Pond homeowners in that there would be opportunity to access both neighborhoods from different roadways.

To date the development design team and City Staff have explored all opportunities to access the site.

- Our original option as proposed of using the access from the site through Woodcreek Boulevard extended and Algebe Way was recommended for denial by City Council from the Planning Commission

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- With help of staff we explored the option of access through Woodcreek extended to Washtenaw from the currently vacant 50 foot right-of-way to the west of Arborland Mall, or Pittsfield Boulevard extended. Our traffic engineer studied this option and it did not change the findings of the initial report in that it just moved the traffic queuing from Chalmers and Washtenaw to the location of Pittsfield Boulevard extended and Washtenaw. Traffic queuing from Chalmers and Washtenaw would just be relocated to this location. Further it was noted that with review of this option by staff and MDOT that there were improvements planned for Washtenaw that would not be conducive to this vehicular connection.
- With this we were left with the option to look at connection to the north. North to Chalmers, or north to Huron River Drive.
 - To Chalmers would require a number of variances from the County Road Commission to allow access in this location. It would also require the relocation of Mallett's Creek as the creek is located adjacent to the east edge of Chalmers. All of this plus more extensive floodplain and wetland impacts that other routes rendered this a non-viable option.
 - To Huron River Drive begins to look like a fairly feasible alternative. Geometric standards of the County and City are able to be met as noted in the reviews by staff. The location and alignment does impact natural features, to the least amount possible while also providing for safe access to Huron River Drive.

Conclusion

We believe we have worked in good faith in pursuit of our study, review, and design in the spirit of the request from the City Council to explore the opportunity to connect to Huron River Drive. We have developed a plan, completed studies, submitted for MDEQ permit, and made modification based on various stakeholder input. The plan before you conveys this. Yes, there are natural features impacts, the current ordinance would never allow staff to recommend a plan that impacts natural features to gain their support even if the tradeoff was other improved conditions (vehicular access, utility connection, pedestrian connection).

Impacts to natural features as defined by ordinance for the improvement of the current condition happens all the time for projects throughout the City. This project will have far less an impact on wetlands than other road projects within the City (Nixon and Dhu Varren Roundabout) that are also being undertaken to improve the current condition.

Our goal tonight is to review with you the current plan, answer any questions, and to gain contingent approval of this current site plan for South Pond Village.