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PROJECT NARRATIVE

for

RICE POND VILLAGE 17 RICE ROAD, MILLBURY

FEBRUARY 19, 2024

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HISTORY

The Rice Pond Village project is proposed on 15.6 acre site on the northerly side of Rice Road that had, for decades, been a single family home owned by the McLaughlin family.

After negotiating with the McLaughlin family to purchase their land and develop it, the Applicant put together a development team and directed the preparation of plans for a project containing 52 condominiums across the site in a layout that would alter 7.6 acres of the site. Site Plans and an application for a necessary Special Permit were filed with the Millbury Planning Board in April 2021.

After the Applicant and his project team attended eight meetings of the Planning Board and made nearly as many revisions to the Site Plans to try to accommodate the Board, including reducing the unit count from 52 to 46, the project was still denied by the Board.

At the same time, an Order of Conditions had been issued for the project by the Millbury Conservation Commission. That Order was appealed by an abutter but DEP issued a Superseding Order of Conditions confirming the project's wetland boundaries and proposed layout.

The Applicant assessed his options at that point and, noting that the Town of Millbury is deficient in its supply of affordable housing, directed the development team to draw up plans for a multifamily housing development to be put forth as a Comprehensive Permit development under Chapter 40B of state law.

Concept Plans were prepared with varying numbers of units and with several different options for the building and parking layout of the development. The one that fit the site best was chosen and initial calculations made as to the ability to infiltrate all captured surface runoff, to provide sufficient parking and what traffic impacts would be. This rough work was presented to the Applicant and a go ahead was given to revise the Site Plans for a multifamily development with three buildings and 192 units.

The various project team members including lawyers, architects, the traffic engineer, the landscape architect and the civil design engineer then went forward preparing designs with those Concept Plans as their base.

A Preliminary Site Plan was developed and the Applicant approached the Millbury Board of Selectmen asking that Board to sign on to a LIP agreement in order to proceed as a so-called "friendly 40B" project with the Applicant agreeing to certain concessions in off-site work and donations to the Town.

The Preliminary Site Plan proposing 192 housing units was then filed with MassHousing and, after review, a Project Eligibility Letter was granted to the Rice Pond Village project. On October 31, 2023, an Application for a Comprehensive Permit for Rice Pond Village was filed with the Millbury Zoning Board of Appeals.

SITE CONDITIONS AND COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT DESIGN

The Rice Pond Village project is proposed on 15.6 acre site that has an existing single family home at #17 with a lawn on all sides but especially large in the rear of the house. Other than this house and yard the cover of the site is wooded with a pond and wetland at the southwest border of the property.

Topography

The topography of the site is hilly with a local high point ridge running southeast to northwest from off to the west side of the existing house. From that ridge, at elevation 410 to 412, the grades drop down to elevations 376 to 380 as you reach the boundary with the Providence and Worcester railroad on one side of the site and elevation 390 at the pond on the other side.

These grades dictated the location and orientation of the proposed buildings to at least approximately the proposed design the long axes of the buildings parallel to that ridge line in order to minimize necessary earthwork.

In order to balance out the site's cuts and fills, the grades at the top of the ridge will be cut down and that fill will be spread further from the ridge. This will also lessen the grade of the entrance off Rice Road.

Soils

Soils on site are mapped as being nearly all Merrimac series soils, among the most sandy, most gravelly and most permeable soils found in this area. These soils are often found at the site of gravel pits and if tested for the suitability of construction of a septic system will often have percolation rates of 2 minutes per inch or less.

However, two dozen deep observation holes excavated around the site revealed soils of widely varying quality. From the top of the ridge running through the site proceeding to the southwest, toward the pond, soils were more average quality sandy loam textured tills. Similar quality soils were found along the boundary with the Providence & Worcester railroad near the power line easement. And, much of the plateau of the back yard of the existing house appears to have been created through the placement of several feet of fill.

But areas along the site's Rice Road Frontage and along the boundary with the Providence & Worcester railroad were revealed to have the extremely permeable soils predicted by the soil maps.

These soil conditions dictated that infiltration structures must be placed in the locations now proposed for them in order for the drainage system to prevent an increase in the rate of flow of stormwater to abutters and for the project to satisfy DEP's stormwater management standards.

Vegetation

Most of the contiguous, developable portion of the site has a combination of deciduous and coniferous tree cover. Over most of the site these trees are of unexceptional size and not unusually old. However, there are four very large diameter trees along the site's Rice Road frontage. One of these, west of the existing driveway, is already dead. The other three, including two oaks and a hickory, were deemed very significant by the Millbury Tree Warden.

Initially, we were not cognizant of how exceptional these trees are. The design has since been revised to move grading, sidewalks, an infiltration structure, a construction period staging area and a possible auxiliary access away from these trees to preserve them.

Less than half of the site will be altered by the proposed development. In addition, the project's landscape architect has designed an attractive scheme of planting around the buildings and in landscaped islands with 129 trees and 186 shrubs to complement the facades of the buildings, to provide parking lot shading and screen the development from abutters.

Access

The property has 453 feet of frontage on Rice Road. It has additional frontage near the intersection of Rice Road and South Main Street but that frontage is separated from most of the site by a bordering vegetated wetland associated with the intermittent stream that flows into and out of the pond.

Opposite the middle of the 453 feet of usable frontage on Rice Road is the existing intersection of Rice Road with Thomas Hill Road. Because of normal prohibitions about creating slightly offset intersections that result in conflicting turning movements, the existence of this intersection dictated that the main site entrance should be in that location, directly opposite Thomas Hill Road, to achieve the best traffic configuration, a 4 way intersection.

OFF-SITE WORK

As part of the LIP agreement with the Millbury Selectmen, the Applicant has agreed to do three things. He will donate \$100,000 to the Town for use in improving Windle field and for other goals at its discretion. He will install a new sidewalk along the northerly side of the Rice Road traveled way from the site's entrance to the intersection with South Main Street. And, lastly, he will prepare and submit an engineering design for improvements to the intersection of Rice Road and (Providence Street)

SUMMARY

As should be clear from the discussion above, the project layout was determined in large part by the existing site characteristics. As proposed, the design will create an attractive new development providing many needed housing units while minimizing the construction work and site disruption and creating the safest possible vehicle access for those units.