

Cedar Lane subdivision application reviewed

Neighbors voice concerns over water at public hearing

By Michaela Kennedy

The Planning Commission last week held a public hearing on a proposed nine-lot subdivision on Cedar Lane.

Neighbors at the April 5 meeting voiced concerns of possible water shortages to the development team, and the commission took a close look at restrictions that would be put on the property.

Attorney John Murphy, representing applicants Joseph Manning and family, told the commission that the family had owned the 10-acre parcel on the north side of Cedar Lane for more than 50 years. Murphy said the area was "environmentally sensitive" and revisions made to the plan reflected suggestions made by the commission.

A private gravel road would be maintained by a homeowners' association, and nine wells would serve the homes, Murphy said. He also said that the owners and the town put "lots of restrictions on the use of the land."

In a summary of the findings of the ground water survey for the site and neighborhood, hydrogeologist Paul Aldinger noted that three wells were installed on the property and were pumped for a week to see if they would have any effect on the neighboring wells.

Aldinger said that his research

team monitored the natural fluctuation of the wells, finding "quite a fluctuation as a result of an owner's personal use of that well."

Louis Dibrasco of Cedar Lane voiced concern that the development was being "maxed out" and would cause a water shortage. Aldinger responded that, according to the hydro-geological study, "We are taking out less than 10 percent of the water infiltration."

Aldinger said that the pumping rate tested, with a combined flow of 5 gallons per minute, showed "a relatively small impact on the neighboring wells." He also noted that the survey checked the quality of the water.

The principal concern is nitrates," Aldinger said, adding that the level found was around 2 milligrams per liter, much lower than the 10-milligrams-per-liter limit set for drinking water.

Aldinger went on to answer questions about the depth of the wells. He said that in the testing, the difference in the fluctuation levels was not more than 4 or 5 feet. Town Planner Lisa Bryer added that the town hired its own hydrogeologist who confirmed Aldinger's findings.

"We concluded that there is plenty of water in that aquifer to supply an additional nine homes," Aldinger said.

Commissioner Richard Ventrone brought up an objection to the allowance of automated sprinkler systems and asked that those

who used them be required to install a cistern to capture the water. Ventrone stressed the importance of saving water for the rest of the island.

Commissioner Barry Holland pointed out that there was so much controversy over which would be better, an automated sprinkler system or no sprinkler system. "If you're watering in the early hours of the morning, I would venture to say that a lot of that water is going back into the ground and recharging the aquifer. We don't have any restrictions on automatic sprinklers on any other part of the island, to put a restriction on this particular set of homes would be discriminatory," she said.

George Gifford, the landscape architect for the project, gave three benefits of automatic sprinkler systems: the timing of the irrigation system, placement of the sprinkler heads, choice of heads and water application. "You can set it when you're asleep early in the morning to avoid evaporation. Drip irrigation, soaker hoses, often placed under mulch, can be rain sensitive," he explained.

Planning Commission Chairman Gary Girard agreed with Holland. "I don't think it's fair to single out this development. If it becomes a problem, we'll have to look at it at a later date, island-wide," he said.

Girard moved to direct the town planner to incorporate conditions into a motion to be reviewed and voted on at the

commission's next meeting.

In new business, the commission gave a preapplication review of a development plan at 10 Narragansett Ave., owned by Preston RE LLC.

Attorney Bruce McIntyre, representing the applicant, gave an overview of the project and noted that the owner planned to reconstruct the current apartment building to its original façade.

According to the town planner, the building has been used in recent years for as many as 10 rental apartments, but was appraised by the town in 2004 as a five-family structure.

Commissioner Victor Calabretta brought up the consideration of affordable housing. "From our point of view there has to be waivers that could be interpreted as subsidies. This is an opportunity to fulfill the town's require-

ment. I am going to be motivated by affordable housing," he said.

Bryer said the applicant was looking for an exchange of information and goals and desires of the commission for the site as well as guidance for the future, formal application.

In correspondence, the commission received a letter from Attorney Joseph Palumbo stating Michael and Janice Dutton's intention to withdraw their pending subdivision application.

In other business, the commission continued applications for:

- Theodore Petit to construct a new dwelling at 415 Seaside Drive.

- Elaine Enterprises to construct a new house on North Main Road.

Commissioner Jean Brown was absent.



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