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April 21, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ON THE NOTICE OF PROJECT CHANGE

PROJECT NAME : The Village at Russell Farm
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Methuen
PROJECT WATERSHED : Bare Meadow Brook
EOEA NUMBER : 13667
PROJECT PROPONENT : Homestead Village, LLC
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : March 22, 2006

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L., c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I determine that this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Originally proposed in a November 2005 Environmental Notification Form (ENF), the project consisted of the phased (Phase I, Phase II) development of a mixed use residential community for seniors (55 and older) and office/retail development on a 20.92-acre site located off Merrimack Street (Route 110) in Methuen. The Village at Russell Farm project also included the construction of one main accessway (Village Lane) from Route 110 and one gated emergency accessway from the project site along an existing town-owned way (Palermo Street) to Route 110. The project's water supply (approximately 27,340 gallons per day (gpd)), will be serviced by the Town of Methuen. The project's wastewater flows (approximately 27,340 gpd) will be conveyed by the Town of Methuen to the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District for treatment and disposal. A Certificate on the ENF was issued on December 9, 2005, finding that the project adequately and properly complied with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act.

Phase I Activities

Phase I will include the construction of 50 attached residential condominium units in 19 separate buildings, and related utilities and stormwater management infrastructure including 3 detention basins on a 14.66-acre portion of the project site. Phase I construction will include an attached 2-car parking garage for each of the proposed residential condominium units.

Phase II Activities

Under Phase II, the proponent proposes to construct 2 senior apartment buildings (80 units total), 7 attached residential condominium units in three separate buildings, and a three-story 27,810 sf retail/office building and related utilities and stormwater management infrastructure including 1 detention basins on a 1.26-acre portion of the project site. A total of 211 surface parking spaces (110 residential apartment, 64 office, 37 retail, and 7 2-car garages for the residential condominium units) will be constructed in Phase II. The project includes the construction of an on-site sewer pump station, approximately 3,000 linear feet of paved roadway with sidewalk, and stormwater and utility infrastructure including four detention basins.

Notice of Project Change:

The proponent filed a Notice of Project Change (NPC) which describes the changed project to incorporate Phase III consisting of the construction of an additional 38-unit apartment building, a 3-unit condominium building, a 4,800 sf office/retail building, and 112 additional surface parking spaces. The proponent anticipates that the change to the proposed project will result in a 1.47-acre increase in impervious area (9.91 acres impervious area total), an increase of 412 daily vehicle trips (2,024 vtd total), and an increase of approximately 9,222 gpd for the project's potable water supply demand (36,562 gpd total), and wastewater flows (36,562 gpd total), respectively.

Stormwater:

As previously described in the ENF submitted for this project, the proposed stormwater management plan includes drainage swales, periodic road sweeping, deep sump hooded catch basins, and a total of four permanent stormwater detention basins to service the project's stormwater flows for eventual discharge to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW) abutting the project site's northeastern boundary. I note that the project site is located within the Critical Supporting watershed for the Greater Merrimack Core Habitat, which is a critical or exemplary habitat for aquatic species. The project should be sited, designed and constructed to avoid and minimize impacts to the environment within this watershed. The proponent must demonstrate to DEP that the project's stormwater management plan incorporates both structural and non-structural best management practices (BMPs) consistent with DEP's Stormwater Management Act Guidelines and the Wetlands Protection Act performance standards particularly in the areas of rooftop runoff, source control and pollution prevention.

Low Impact Development (LID)

I ask that the proponent consult with DEP to identify and incorporate opportunities for employing LID techniques in site design and storm water management plans. LID techniques incorporate stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and can reduce impacts to land and water resources by conserving natural systems and hydrologic functions. The primary tools of LID are landscaping features and naturally vegetated areas, which encourage detention, infiltration and filtration of stormwater on-site. LID can also protect natural resources by incorporating wetlands, stream buffers, and mature forests as project design features. In addition to the use of permeable surface parking materials and landscaped bioretention areas to significantly reduce the total amount of impervious area and stormwater runoff from the proposed project, I encourage the proponent to give further consideration to the use of swales, filter strips, depressed parking islands, and porous pavement throughout the project site. I encourage the proponent to contact EOEAs LID Technical Assistance Initiative for more information on LID.

Traffic:

Using the Institute of Traffic Engineers Trip Generation land use code 230 for residential condominiums/townhouse, land use code 220 for apartments, land use code 710 for general office, and land use code 814 for specialty retail center, the proposed project change is estimated to generate approximately 412 new additional vehicle trips on an average weekday. According to the comments received from MHD, the additional vehicle trips associated with the project change will not significantly traffic on Merrimack Street (Route 110). The proponent has committed to implementing timing changes to the Pleasant Valley/Merrimack Street intersection. The proponent should continue to work closely with MHD's District 4 Office during final project design.

Transit:

The proponent has indicated that Merrimack Street (Route 110) is currently served by the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) (Lawrence-Methuen-Haverhill) Bus Route 01. According to the MHD's comments, the proponent has committed to construct on-site sidewalk linkages to Route 110. I ask that the proponent work with the MVRTA to ensure that the residents of the proposed project will be served by the MVRTA. I strongly encourage the proponent to provide a bus stop adequate room for a public bus service drop-off/pick up location within the project site at the project's Village Lane/Route 110 intersection. The proponent should work closely with MVRTA's Office of Special Services, MassRIDES, and the Town of Methuen to identify specific opportunities for serving the Village at Russell Farm project.

Water Conservation:

The proponent will need to demonstrate to DEP that the final project design meets the Commonwealth's water conservation standards. . I strongly encourage the proponent to incorporate water conservation and water use efficiency in the project design to optimize, and comply with the March 1989 state plumbing code.

The proponent should commit to employing efficient residential water conservation technologies for the project including: water saving devices; low flow toilets; and low flow appliances (dishwashers, washing machines) for all proposed new construction. The proponent should implement a proposed Irrigation Management Plan (IMP) to further reduce the project's irrigation water demand. An IMP could involve the use of: amended soils and compost; the planting of native and drought-tolerant species of trees, shrubs, and turf grasses; an automated water efficient irrigation system; and a water management protocol for drought conditions. I ask that the proponent consult with DEP, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission's *Lawn and Landscape Water Conservation, An Addendum to the Water Conservation Standards for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, October 2002*, during the final design of the proponent's IMP.

Construction Period:

The proponent should continue to evaluate construction period impacts, including impacts from earth moving, impacts to vegetation, potential impacts from erosion and sedimentation, traffic impacts on adjacent roadways, and impacts to adjacent land uses, and analyze feasible measures that can be employed to avoid or eliminate these impacts. The proponent should coordinate construction activities with town officials and abutting property owners. Based on a review of the information provided by the proponent and after consultation with the relevant public agencies, I find that the potential impacts of this project do not warrant further MEPA review. The proponent needs to address the comments of the permitting agencies in depth, and resolve any remaining issues in the permitting process particularly as they may pertain to stormwater, water conservation, traffic mitigation, the need for safe and pedestrian friendly access to the project site, and MVRTA bus service for the residents of the proposed project.

April 21, 2006
DATE


Stephen R. Pritchard, Secretary

Comments received:

04/11/06 MA Department of Environmental Protection – NERO
04/11/06 Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD)

NPC# 13667
SRP/NCZ/ncz