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May 17, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT NAME : Ridgcrest Residential Development
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Haverhill
PROJECT WATERSHED : Merrimack River
EOEA NUMBER : 13586
PROJECT PROPONENT : Bradford Holdings, LLC
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : April 10, 2006

As Secretary of Environmental Affairs, I hereby determine that the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) submitted on this project **adequately and properly complies** with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and with its implementing regulations (301 CMR 11.00).

Project Description

As described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), the DEIR and the FEIR, the proposed project consists of construction of a 360-unit residential development, associated parking, accessory structures and utilities on a 113-acre site in Haverhill. The undeveloped site contains forested upland and approximately seven acres of wetlands, including a certified vernal pool. According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), the project site is located within a critical Supporting Watershed for the Greater Merrimack Core Habitat, a critical or exemplary habitat for aquatic species. The site is abutted by single family homes to the south, east and west and two large residential complexes to the north.

The development will include 33 buildings, accessory structures, parking, access roads and stormwater management infrastructure. Access to the site will be provided by an extension of Presidential Drive. Potential environmental impacts of the project are associated with alteration of approximately 44.8 acres of land, creation of 13.8 acres of new impervious surfaces, alteration of 1, 350 sf of wetlands, generation of approximately 88,750 gallons per day (gpd) of

wastewater and generation of 1,908 new vehicle trips per day (tpd). Mitigation measures include establishment of a 46-acre Conservation Restriction (CR), a stormwater management system, wetlands replication and improvements to existing roadway and wastewater infrastructure.

Jurisdiction

The project is subject to environmental review and mandatory preparation of an EIR pursuant to Section 11.03 (1)(a)(2) because it requires a state permit and will create more than 10 acres of new impervious surfaces. The project requires a Sewer Connection permit from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and an Order of Conditions from the Haverhill Conservation Commission (and a Superseding Order of Conditions from DEP in the event that the Order is appealed). MEPA jurisdiction is limited to the subject matter of required permits. These include wetlands, drainage and wastewater.

Review of the FEIR

Because the DEIR provided a reasonably complete and stand-alone description and analysis of the project and its alternatives and provided sufficient mitigation commitments, the March 17, 2006 Certificate on the DEIR indicated that I would allow the proponent to submit the FEIR as a response to comments. The FEIR addressed the substantive comments received, provided an update on wetlands permitting and development of wetlands mitigation and provided revised Section 61 Findings as required.

The Haverhill Conservation Commission is reviewing the Notices of Intent (NOI) for this project and its off-site mitigation. Since the filing of the DEIR, the proponent has indicated that, consistent with comments from DEP and the Haverhill Conservation Commission, it is developing infiltration measures for its stormwater management system and ensuring that the side slopes of detention basins are no steeper than 3 horizontal to 1 vertical (3:1). Issues identified by DEP in its comments on the FEIR, have also been noted by staff to the Haverhill Conservation Commission (March 16, 2006 letter from Robert E. Moore, Jr. to the Haverhill Conservation Commission). The Conservation Commission has sufficient authority to address the issues identified and I expect that the proponent will continue working cooperatively with the Commission to ensure the impacts of the project are fully mitigated.

Mitigation

As required, the FEIR included updated Draft Section 61 Findings. The proponent has committed to the following mitigation measures:

- Placement of a permanent CR on 46 acres of the site (identified in Section 4, Drawing 1 entitled Open Space/Conservation Area Conceptual Delineation in the DEIR) including several wetland areas and a certified vernal pool.
- Use of retaining walls to minimize disturbance within wetland buffer zones.
- Use of a 3-sided pre-cast concrete arched bridge structure for the access road wetland crossing to avoid wetland resource areas. The entire structure will be, at a minimum, three feet outside of any wetland resource area.

- Development of a wetlands replication plan for areas of the site previously impacted by All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use. Areas will be restored through re-grading and stabilization of disturbed soils with native seed mixes.
- Design of 24 feet wide roadways and location of some parking under townhouses to minimize creation of impervious surfaces.
- Construction, operation and maintenance of a stormwater management system consistent with DEP Stormwater Management Policy including: installation of a new catch basin system and drainage pipe network to collect surface water runoff from parking and roadway areas and distribute it to detention basins; use of additional BMPs including Stormceptors, deep sump hooded catch basins, street sweeping and rip-rap outlet protection and crushed stone velocity dissipaters; and grading improvements including grassed drainage swales (with slopes no steeper than 3:1) and earthen berms to convey hillside runoff to the system.
- Correction of existing flooding problems at adjacent Forest Acres residential development through improvements to the stormwater management system. These include: grading improvements, construction of grassed drainage swales, and installation of manholes, catch basins and pipe to convey runoff from wetlands and hills to existing drainage system; and assessment and repair (including replacement if necessary) of approximately 150 linear feet of existing pipe and associated catch basin downstream of Basin 11 at the eastern corner of the Forest Acres property.
- Use of erosion and sedimentation controls during construction as identified in Section 5.50 of the DEIR.
- Upgrading of three segments of the Presidential Drive sewer main. Approximately 500 feet of 8-inch diameter pipe will be replaced with 12-inch diameter pipe.
- Replacement of Sherwood Drive water pump station or construction of a new water pump station on Presidential Drive.
- Re-analysis of existing and proposed systems when fire flow requirements and pumping station design parameters have been finalized.
- Signalization of and geometric improvements to South Main Street/Presidential Drive intersection.
- Implementation of a traffic calming plan for Presidential Drive and Forest Acres Drive including: construction of traffic islands, speed humps, and bump outs; replacement of six crosswalks and installation of four new crosswalks along Presidential Drive, South Main Street and Forest Acres Drive; and pavement marking and traffic/parking control signs.
- Encouragement of contractors to use measures that help minimize air pollution such as retrofitting construction equipment with particulate filters and oxidation catalysts and consideration of a provision to reimburse contractors (in whole or in part) for using on-road low sulfur diesel.

Based on a review of the FEIR and consultation with public agencies, I hereby find that the proponent has met its obligations under MEPA to avoid, minimize or mitigate Damage to the Environment to the maximum feasible extent. I am satisfied that any outstanding issues can be addressed through the state and local permit and review process. The proposed project requires no further review under MEPA and may proceed to state permitting.

May 17, 2006
Date


Stephen R. Pritchard

Comments Received:

5/10/06 Department of Environmental Protection (NERO)

SRP/CDB/cdb