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Supervisors Grant Preliminary Sleepy Hollow Development



At their meeting on Monday, May 13, 2024, the South Park Township Supervisors granted preliminary approval for the Sleepy Hollow Development known as Majestic Woods. The plan is to build 108 individual homes on the 63 acres of property adjacent to the County's South Park. One hundred and six (106) of the new homes will be located in an R-2 Zoning area, and 2 will be located in an R-1 zoning area. This parcel of land had been identified as low density residential in the Township's Comprehensive plan.

The developer's representative, Michael Wetzel of Victor-Wetzel Associates, a Landscape Architect and Land Planning firm, presented the plan to the Supervisors and approximately 150 concerned citizens who attended the meeting.

To summarize the events leading up to this meeting, here is the time-line on the application. After submitting the application for the development on Monday, March 4, 2024 to the Township, Mr. Wetzel presented the plan to the Township Planning Commission at their meeting on Wednesday, March 27. Many South Park residents were at the meeting to express their concerns about the proposed plan. The Planning Commission listened to the concerns of the residents regarding the development as presented and tabled their decision to give the developer time to respond to the comments from the public. The plan was again presented to the Planning Commission at their meeting on Wednesday, April 24. Mr. Wetzel showed how they had addressed the concerns of the public. And again the public had a chance to offer their thoughts on the plan. After listening to everyone, the Planning Commission voted to accept the submitted documents for preliminary approval as they met all of the zoning and application requirements; but then the Commission voted to "Not Recommend" the project to the Township Supervisors.

Mr. Wetzel then attended the Supervisors meeting on Monday, May 13 to ask for preliminary approval for the project so they could proceed with the detailed planning. He presented the proposed plan to the supervisors. In addition to information from his earlier presentation, he showed an aerial picture of the property from 1975 showing that the land was being farmed then and was devoid of trees.

Over 150 people were in attendance again and voiced their concern over the proposed plan. Concerns from the attendees dealt with:

- **Sleepy Hollow Road and the intersection with Stoltz Road**
Residents were concerned that the condition of Sleepy Hollow Road could not handle the traffic in and out of the development, because it was not up to Township code and was too narrow. A small bridge (a culvert) over a creek is also involved - speakers felt that this bridge was too narrow and couldn't handle the increased traffic including trucks, school busses, and emergency vehicles. In addition there
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is only one way in and out of the development. In an emergency, they questioned if fire trucks or ambulances could gain access to the plan. Questions were presented on whether or not hydrological studies were planned before proceeding.

• The integrity/reliability of the Developer

Several speakers were concerned about the past reputation of the developer; they presented information that the developer had run into EPA compliance problems on previous projects and didn't want to see the same thing happen here in South Park. In one case, the developer actually sued the municipality for some obscure reason.

• The impact on the horse farms and stables in the area.

Speakers were concerned that the riding stables in the area would lose safe access to the park if the development is built. The proposed plan did not address any of the suggestions for horse trails to provide park access and the horses would have to share the road with other vehicles which is not always safe for drivers or riders. They asked that the plan include dedicated horse trails along Sleepy Hollow Road so that riders would not have to contend with traffic on Sleepy Hollow Road.

• Potential flooding from the area - Storm

Water Containment - Mine drainage

There were many speakers who were concerned with the handling of storm water; if not done properly they felt this would cause flooding in the streams and horse farms downstream of the development. And, if not done properly, they felt there was a good possibility of acid mine runoff and even mine subsidence.

• Effect on the Buffalo in the County Park.

Many residents expressed their concern over the potential impact of the increased traffic, noise, and construction activity on the health and well being of the buffalo in the park. Their opinion was that the development was too close to the buffalo pen and would be harmful to the existing herd.

• Geotech Study

One resident pointed out that the geotech report has a statement in it that said the land was "not suitable" for development. The geotech representative said that was in reference to the top 2 feet of dirt on the property.

• Loss of Green Space

Many of those that spoke also presented a plea not to destroy more green space in the Township. They felt that the land was also looked at as part of the park and felt that it should stay part of the park. Pleas were made to curtail development in the Township all together. One resident even reminded the supervisors how important trees are to the environment, particularly in removing pollutants from the air, and pleaded to save the trees.

After the audience had the opportunity to express their concerns there was a 10-minute recess. Upon return, the developer's representative read a letter from the current owner of the property asking that the supervisors uphold private property rights and to follow the law.

Mr. Wetzel then said that the plan complies with all of the requirements of the Township and asked for preliminary approval. With regard to Sleepy Hollow Road he said the road into the property would be widened but they can not comply with the 50-foot width because they do not own the land; they will widen the road to 24-foot wide up to their property and inside the property the roads will comply to Township road way requirements. The Zoning consultant, Mrs. Yeager, said the plan did comply with all of the Township zoning requirements and had no additional comments.

The Township engineer, Mr. Dan Deiseroth, of Gateway Engineers, said the plan has to detail how they will be handling storm water, but that will be done before final approval. He then said that the plan, as submitted, does comply with Township requirements for preliminary approval. He further added that the developer will have to post a 110% bond before starting the project.

The Geotech company said there were no issues with the property and they didn't see any land slide potential. They are recommending grouting the underlaying mines on 5 of the 108 lots. Mines found within 100 feet below Sleepy Hollow Road will also be grouted to ensure the integrity of Sleepy Hollow Road.

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The process now is that the developer will proceed with preparation of their final plans for the development. Once those are completed, they will be submitted to the Planning Commission again for Final Approval. At that time the public will be voice their concerns again on the final plan. After submittal to the Planning Commission and receiving their decision, the final plan has to be submitted again to the Board of supervisors for final approval. At that point progress on Majestic Woods will or won't go forward.