

Southern Tier responses to MVC Questions – 1/17/2023

1/11/23

DRI 730 – Southern Tier Affordable Housing

Follow-up questions during hearing

1. Please confirm whether the proposal will be revised to include the extra dormer units that were discussed with MVC staff. If these are part of the project, a proposal and updated plans, nitrogen calculations, etc. will need to be submitted before the public hearing is closed.

Yes. The team will amend its application to incorporate an additional 3 1-Bedroom apartments within the existing footprint of our 3-unit building. An updated elevation and nitrogen calculations will be presented to the LUPC. Delivery of the 3 additional units will be dependent upon our ability to secure the additional funding necessary to construct them.

2. Explain in more detail why two of the 6-unit buildings are located so close to Edgartown-VH Road. It would seem that smaller units in that location would have less impact visually.

Our goal with the placement of the 6-unit buildings along Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road was centered around the efficiency of the layout in creating the common green through the center of the development. Since all of our buildings are essentially the same height, 30'-2" for a 3-unit building and 32'-8" for a 6-unit building, we did not feel there was a significant difference between the two to move away from the preferred layout. Also, we will be keeping a significant buffer of existing mature trees between the road and the first buildings for both visual and sound screening.

3. What is the ridge height of the 6-unit buildings? (Note that the maximum height of structures in the Island Road District is 24' for a pitched roof, except by special permit.)

The height of a 6-unit building is 32'-8", without taking into account the average grade of the land. Any relief based on height will be requested through our 40B Comprehensive Permit through the town

4. Would it be feasible to locate the units on the western edge of the development closer to the lot line, and relocate the access road and associated parking spaces so they are between those units and the group of units to the east? Although it might reduce some of the privacy elements of the existing layout, it would increase the amount of open, undeveloped space (providing a benefit both environmentally and to the residents as a whole) and provide a greater buffer for the residences to the east of the development.

We have reviewed this request and believe there are drawbacks to this concept. First, the existence of the central green areas for the residents of this neighborhood provides an amenity that would be eliminated if the road were to change. Second, it would cause a complete redesign of the development that would impact the grading, road configuration, and the existing approval from Natural Heritage. This alteration would require months of rework thus putting us out side of the current funding round and delaying the project for up to a year.

5. Would it be feasible to reorient the units to provide south-facing roofs? Please quantify the benefit, if any, in doing so, in terms of efficiency, KWh generated, and project costs.

The east/west orientation of our homes is driven by our desire to center the housing around a shared common green. We can generate the same KWh with the east/west facing panels as the south-facing panels by adding some additional panels. And we can take advantage of the new Inflation Reduction Act legislation to help pay for the additional panels.

6. The possible road to the northern property is shown on the site plans as “area designated for future road to rear development parcel,” and the 12/14/22 memo from the Affordable Housing Committee notes that the town RFP included a “requirement to plan for the road access to the 23.67 acres.” Please explain in more detail what alternative locations were considered for the road, and why it was sited in the proposed location, rather than on the west side of the property.

In evaluating the grades of the property, it was readily apparent that siting the road along the eastern edge of the property was the best solution. The road could not be located on the western edge because the town’s parcel does not extend to that side of the property. Placing the road in the center of the development would not provide the same level of neighborhood feel for the residents and would also require significant grading due to the existing knoll. Also, by cutting through the center of the property, it would divide the protected habitat which would likely have been denied by Natural Heritage.

The current location is relatively flat and low lying compared to the knoll and abutting properties on Gamba Road. It is set more than 70’ away from the closest house and more than 150’ and 300’ away from the 2 other abutting houses. Because of the flat grade, less area will need to be disturbed if it is ever constructed thus allowing more of the existing mature vegetation to remain as a buffer. Additional screening and fencing could be incorporated into its design if the road were ever to be built.

Lastly, any future development that would incorporate the road would ultimately require a DRI application and come before the MVC for review and conditions.

7. Were any alternatives considered (including in regard to the future road) that would preserve a narrow wildlife corridor between the Southern Woodlands property and the state forest?

Yes, that was part of our original proposal to NHESP, however they considered this connection to be less of a priority than a contiguous undisturbed area being retained as habitat. Also, the southern edge of the property is outside the designated habitat area and thereby already a break in the conceptual corridor.

8. Explain whether and how the community building could be relocated to reduce possible impacts on neighbors to the east.

The placement of the community house is actually sited in such a way to minimize the sound traveling east. The building is nestled into the existing knoll to such a degree to leverage the extra height of the knoll and foliage to act as a sound buffer. The orientation is also designed to have the openings face west so that sound will travel in that direction as people come out of the community space and towards the community green. Also, the building is centrally located within the neighborhood to make it a focal point for the residents while still being more than 225’ from the nearest house.

9. Explain why the four light poles along the road must be 20 feet high. Were shorter alternatives considered? Is it possible to eliminate the last pole, or if necessary replace it with something shorter and less likely to spill light to the abutting property?

We are agreeable to removing the light posts altogether.

10. Confirm there will be no irrigation (other than to establish plantings).

There will be no irrigation installed in the development.