

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

Economic Development Committee – Joint Workgroup Meeting

EDC Members Present: Donald Brown, Edward Morell, and Paul White

EDC Members Absent: Jo Ann Wright, Lesia Mckenzie, Barry Perry, Steven Kyle Williams

Staff Present: David Bergmark, Patrick Reidy, Teresa Piner

Guests: Laurie Ford, Shannon McSwiney, Brad Rhinehalt, Mayor Tim Hinnant, Commissioner Parham, Commissioner Laughery, Commissioner Gray, Commissioner Boyette, Commissioner Lutz, Brian Staples, Harold Broadwell, Regina Harmon, Ginger Bullock, Ginny Byrd Porter, Josh Porter, and Johnny Whitfield.

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David Bergmark called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Mr. Bergmark said there were not enough EDC members present to take official action. He said if another member showed up, they would approve the minutes later. Mr. Bergmark said Laurie Ford with Newland Communities was here with her colleagues to give a presentation on Wendell Falls.

Laurie Ford introduced herself and her colleague Shannon McSwiney. She said Newland’s project manager for this project, Brad Rhinehalt, would be joining them shortly. She said she wanted to formally announce that Newland would adopt the Wendell Falls name for this project.

Laurie Ford gave a PowerPoint presentation, which covered Newland’s identity, their strategy for Wendell Falls, market research, and survey results (**SEE ATTACHED PRESENTATION**).

Following the presentation, the following Question and Answer (Q&A) session began.

Mr. White asked when the north-south collector road off of Wendell Falls parkway would be constructed. Brad Rhinehalt said the construction date would depend on how discussions go with potential commercial clients.

Mr. White asked if Newland had spoken with WakeMed about potentially locating in Wendell Falls. Laurie Ford said they had entered discussions with WakeMed, but nothing was certain. She said WakeMed had gone through some restructuring lately.

Donald Brown asked if Newland knew what price point they were going to start with for new homes. Laurie Ford said they had a general idea. She said first they had to build momentum. She said when the project first starts, they will probably be in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range. She said the initial lots would be 45 to 60 feet wide.

Ginger Bullock said the realty business was seeing a pattern of extended families living together. She said some builders were catering to this lifestyle. Laurie Ford said Lenar was doing some multi-generational homes. She said Newland’s market research identified this as a potential product.

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Mayor Tim Hinnant asked if Newland was going to separate the different consumer groups, such as 'Rock Steady' vs. 'At Capacity'. Laurie said there could be an age restricted segment for those who may not want kids to be prevalent.

Paul White asked if Newland was reserving an area for higher end homes. Laurie Ford said the higher end homes would come later in the project. She said when the \$750,000 plus homes are built in a project, they elevate the value of all the surrounding homes. She said you have to time their entrance right and identify premium locations for those products.

Laurie Ford said Newland did not have new roadway construction budgeted for early in the process.

Ginger Bullock asked if there was a demand for assisted living facilities in their research. Laurie Ford said she thought assisted living facilities could potentially be a component. She said the question over whether WakeMed might locate here would influence that decision.

Laurie Ford said for the Wendell Falls project, there would be a need for commercial space to be incorporated earlier in the project timeline.

Commissioner Laughery asked if Newland had any thoughts on how Wendell Falls Parkway could be better integrated into Wendell's road system. Laurie Ford said she thought there was a good transition in scale from the wider road through the project to downtown Wendell. She said Newland was in the process of planning the landscaping and lighting plan for Wendell Falls Parkway. She said Teresa Piner had expressed a desire for connectivity and continuity as the road progresses.

Brad Rhinehalt said the four way stop at Eagle Rock road would likely go away as trips increased. He said he was still studying the Transportation Improvement Assessment Newland had.

Paul White asked what Mr. Rhinehalt's background was. Mr. Rhinehalt said he had worked on Heritage and Brier Creek. He said he had worked in the area for 26 years. He said recently he worked for KB Homes doing Land Development work.

Ed Morrell asked if Newland was a builder as well as a developer. Laurie Ford said Newland was not a builder. Brad Rhinehalt said the only thing Newland would be building in Wendell Falls would be the initial amenity center.

Commissioner Boyette asked if House Bill 150 would affect Newland's planned architectural standards. Laurie Ford said since their standards were an agreement between two private entities, she did not think the house bill would affect them. Teresa Piner said the bill would not affect Newland.

Ginny Porter asked how Newland's market research regarding home prices affected the timing of their project. Laurie Ford said once they reached the 200 homes built per year mark, they typically don't go below that mark, even if there is a downturn in the economy.

Shannon McSwiney said the market research evolves and is updated as the project grows.

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Paul White asked where the builders Newland would use would come from. He asked where the action home designs originated. Laurie Ford said Newland would give the builders parameters and options to work within.

Paul White asked what percentage of the first one thousand homes would be built on slab. Laurie Ford said she could not answer that question yet. She said Wendell Falls would have a mix of slab built homes, homes with crawl spaces, and most likely some homes with basements.

Donald Brown asked if Newland would bring in large tract builders or more local or regional builders. Laurie Ford said they typically have both types of builders involved in a project.

Regina Harmon asked if Newland planned on building any condos or townhomes. Laurie Ford said the market research did not support either product. She said, personally, she still thought townhomes might have room for inclusion.

Paul White asked what kind of builders Newland would bring in for their more expensive homes. Laurie Ford said semi-custom and custom builders, such as 'Homes by Dickerson' are typically used.

Patrick Reidy asked if Newland's market research support live-work units. Laurie Ford said the research supported a small amount of live-work units.

Donald Brown asked how large the lots would be in terms of acreage. Brad Rhinehalt said the initial phase would likely be in the quarter acre range.

Commissioner Boyette asked how the type of commercial product incorporated into this project would influence the residential products offered. Laurie Ford said it could vary. She said types of commercial products that interact with amenity/lifestyle factors such as restaurants can influence the type of residential product that is built around it.

Paul White asked where the welcome center would be located. Laurie Ford said the welcome center would be located on the recreation POD.

Paul White asked if Newland had given thoughts to how emergency services would be incorporated into this project. Laurie Ford said Newland had begun discussions with various emergency service agencies. Commissioner Boyette said if Newland positioned the emergency services further back in the neighborhood, the residents would not like it. He said that had occurred in Heddingham.

Regina Harmon asked where commercial sites would be located. Laurie Ford indicated on the map where the commercial PODs were located.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57.