

Limerock condos approved for Harris Road

MELANIE THIBEAULT, Valley Breeze Staff Writer | Apr 8, 2015



SMITHFIELD - In a split 3-2 vote Tuesday night, Smithfield Town Council members approved a zone change allowing developer Anthony Rongione of A & R One LLC to build up to 30 condominium units at 61 Harris Road, the 28-acre site of the former Smithfield Driving Range and Pro Shop Inc.

"This was a difficult one for me after sitting through the public hearing," said Councilman Al LaGreca, who ultimately voted in favor of the zone change.

The proposed development, named the Residence at Limerock, has been the source of controversy after Daniel Porter, the vice president of planning for the North Central State Airport, wrote to the council that the property is located about 4,500 to 5,000 feet away from one of the runways.

The proximity of the airport on Jenckes Hill Road could lead to residents complaining about "aircraft disturbance," he said.

But concerns turned from noise complaints to the safety of future residents if the proposed 30 condos were built.

Rongione had requested that the zoning be changed from low/medium density residential, or R-80, which allows for five single-family homes, to high density multi-family, or R-20M, which would allow for the condos, on approximately 22 acres of the property.

At the public hearing, David Igliozi, of Igliozi and Reis LLP, who represents owner Rongione, tried to explain to the council that the concern about the airport's proximity is related to noise complaints, not the safety of future residents.

"It's not about the increased number of people," Igliozi said on Feb. 3. "It's about the number of noise complaints."

Airport spokesman Porter chimed in: "The airport doesn't have the authority to approve anything in that zone. The development is outside of the runway protection zone. Anything outside of (that zone) is related to noise and height issues."

LaGreca went on to say that if the developer wants to build condos knowing about the threat of noise from the airport, that's his choice.

At the public hearing, Attorney Igliozi said that the developer would agree to add sound-dampening to the condo units to reduce jet noise and he would inform potential buyers that they're in an airport approach zone, so that people are fully aware of the situation.

Tuesday night before the vote was taken, Cavanagh summarized findings from an Airport Cooperative Research Program report, sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration which suggested that a development with high concentrations of people presented a "greater risk in the event of an uncontrolled accident."

She said that she found the proposed condo project to be "a little too dangerous."

Alba responded that the project was vetted by the FAA and was "met with approval by the town's Planning Board."

She added that she wants to do her part to alleviate traffic on Limerock Road and look into putting a traffic light at the Harris Road and Douglas Pike intersection in the future.

In a conversation with the developer, Alba said that she requested that the two units along Limerock Road are eliminated, that a vegetative buffer along Limerock Road is added, and that the six proposed low/moderate income units are fully integrated into the project.

Norm Gauvin, who lives in the Orchard Meadows condominium complex across the street from the proposed development, addressed councilors during the public comment section, saying that another public hearing should have been held because there would have been plenty to be discussed.

Gauvin had emailed the report titled "Enhancing Airport Land Use Compatibility" to councilors in late March.

"As far as safety, calculating the risk is a difficult thing," he said, adding that it's still a risk by putting those condo units on the property with such close proximity to the runway. But, he said, councilors could have avoided that risk by voting the project down.

The developer's original proposal called for 15 two-unit, or duplex, one-story buildings, averaging between 1,600 and 1,800 square feet per unit, projected to cost approximately \$325,000 each.

Under the guidelines of the Affordable Housing Act, Iglizzi said that six 1,200-square-foot condominiums will be designated as low/moderate income housing.

The property has frontage on Douglas Pike to the west, Harris Road to the north, and Limerock Road to the east.