

SENECA

Controversial development on hold ... for now

Forestar plans to refile, cites 'environmental constraints'

BY NORM CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Debate over a proposed development that sparked concerns from Seneca residents in more than six nearby communities ended before it started Monday night.

But the issue may not be over.

Tricia Chassen, entitlements manager for the Carolinas West

Division of the Forestar Group, told the Seneca Planning Commission the company was withdrawing its application for rezoning to build more than 300 homes and townhomes on 98 acres. But she added she expects Forestar to return with another application soon.

Chassen said Forestar officials want

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to evaluate topography information and make any needed changes before coming back to the commission.

"Our stream crossing locations are going to need to be modified, especially in the entrance area off of Queen Annes (Lane) that we have proposed currently," she told the commission at the beginning of Monday's meeting. "Instead of going through the process and having to come back in with a change — having to continue to have the conversation and make changes after we've gone through the meeting with the neighbors — in the effort to be transparent, we'd like a chance to evaluate our site plan with the topo (topography) that we've just received, and make a better site plan based on the environmental constraints."

City council chambers were filled with residents opposing the scope of the development. Many responded with applause.

John Johnston, one of the organizers of opposition to the development as proposed, sent an email out after the meeting.

"Thank you to everyone who showed up at the Planning Commission meeting," he wrote. "Your presence made the difference. Forestar has withdrawn their rezoning application. I assume they will be back with another proposal. It will be up to us to ensure that the next round is consistent with the 'Suburban Living' standards in the comprehensive plan."



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Tricia Chassen, entitlements manager for the Carolinas West Division of the Forestar Group, tells the Seneca Planning Commission on Monday that Forestar will be withdrawing its application.

The Forestar Group plans to develop about 98 acres and build more than 300 single-family homes and townhomes. The development would border Frontage Road, Knollwood Drive, Woodcreek Drive and Queen Annes Lane, but would also affect other neighborhoods nearby, according to residents.

HOW SOON?

Chassen told The Journal after withdrawing the application that the work to refile will begin "immediately." She added while there will likely be changes, she expects the proposal to be like what has already been presented.

Seneca planning and development director Ed Halbig said Forestar officials told his office they are planning to bring a

revised plan in time to be considered in September.

Planning commission chairman Barry Duvall said he learned of the developer's plan to withdraw the application about "three minutes" before Monday's meeting. He said he didn't know what would happen to the proposal now.

"Now that is withdrawn, there is nothing for me to speculate further down

the line," he said. "It may not come back. This is the same as somebody wanting to build a skyscraper over here. It doesn't exist right now.

"I think (Chassen) was honest and said that they have gotten some new (topographical) information on the property," he added. "They're probably reacting to the citizens."

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