

October 15, 2020

Garrett Sadler and Sue White  
5 Tamarack Rd  
Charlotte, VT 05445

Larry Lewack, Town Planner  
Charlotte Planning Commission, Town of Charlotte  
Charlotte, VT 05445  
Via email

Re: Application PC-20-125-sk Donovan (125 Lake Rd.)

Dear Mr. Lewack and members of the Charlotte Planning Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my thoughts on the above referenced subdivision proposal and thank you for your service to our community.

My wife and I live on Tamarack Rd. and consider the proposed development site to be an integral part of our neighborhood. We regularly drive, walk and bike on Lake and Greenbush Roads and walk in the Charlotte Wildlife Refuge which overlooks the proposed development. While we understand that large lot housing development no longer makes economic or environmental sense in Charlotte and Vermont, we believe that this development, as currently described in the Site Sketch Plan and Narrative documents, is not appropriate for this location.

We believe the site falls under the description of Areas of High Public Value as defined in Table 7.1 of the Charlotte Land Use Regulations. The addition of 12 homes as shown on the Site Sketch plan will have an adverse impact on the character of the land, the rural (not suburban) nature of housing in this area, and the traffic on Lake Road and the intersection at Lake and Greenbush, both Scenic Roads and part of the Route 7 View Corridor and the Champlain Bikeways.

I concur with the points raised by Andrew Milliken in his thorough review of the application and I second the questions raised by Tom Heilman regarding the lack of information and specificity in the Site Sketch plan and related Narrative documents. I would like to add the following:

- Site Sketch Plan: The Site sketch plan is confusing. Is Lot 1 bounded by the dashed lines and therefore includes the western Septic Area and the unlabeled Lot at the West edge? Or does Lot 1 exclude the western Septic Area and therefore crosses the farm road, is bounded in the East by Greenbush Rd. and surrounds building Lot 2? If the latter, then is the unlabeled Lot actually Lot 12?
- Septic Areas/Ownership: Are the septic areas and road to be owned jointly by a housing association? Will the Association Bylaws be developed prior to granting

a permit for any development? Will those bylaws address how the association will respond if one or more of the wells run dry?

- Conservation Land: If Lots 1 and 11 are both bounded by the Vermont Railroad to the East, then the site appears to have been divided with a straight E/W boundary line between Lots 1 and 11 with no consideration given to the topography or to the conservation area around Holmes Creek.
- Conservation Land: Lot 11 appears to have a home site in the middle of the woods, which the plan narrative says “we are planning to conserve” while also saying that the subdivision residents will have recreational access to this forest. This forest and Holmes Creek are Areas of High Public Value (Table 7.1 in CLUR) in that they are the corridor that connects the Charlotte Wildlife Refuge and the forests and fields further west. A home site will put a hole into the middle of that corridor and will require that a road be put in crossing Holmes Creek, further damaging an area that has been designated as a conserved natural area (per the Charlotte Zoning Map <https://www.dropbox.com/s/7996sznq30qmin4/AdoptedZoningWall20180423.pdf?dl=0>).
- Conservation Land Suggestion: I suggest that the Town require that all of the proposed conservation area (including the forest and the land adjacent to Holmes Creek) be included in a single lot under one set of covenants, easements or restrictions that are written and approved by the Planning Commission prior to the approval of any permit to subdivide. That land must either be jointly owned and managed under the rules of the Homeowners Association or be owned and managed by an organization familiar with managing conserved land.
- Homesite Distribution: Lot 2, designated as the site of a home for a potential farmer (and which may according to the narrative eventually also include one or more farm buildings), is currently in active agricultural use and in the middle of the current Scenic Viewshed from the Charlotte Wildlife Refuge. (Table 7.1 CLUR). This lot, which is distinctly separate from the clustered houses, diminishes the benefit of clustering house sites, fragments existing farmland, and leaves this site vulnerable for construction of other than the hoped-for farm.
- Homesite Density: Lots 3-10 (and 12 if that is the unlabeled lot to the west) create a density of housing that is completely out of character in a rural area that historically has been open fields and would look more like the subdivisions in South Burlington. It is possible that the developer intends that the layout will conform with the town plan’s concept of creating “villages”, but the developers must identify building envelopes, common lands and proposed planting for screening to enable the planning commission to assess the design from that perspective.
- Affordable Housing allocation: It is unclear from the narrative if or how the developer will actually designate lots for affordable housing and if that designation will carry in the HA bylaws and property covenants.

- Subdivision Power: There is no mention of how power will be brought in to the site or if alternative power sources will be encouraged or required. Clarification on this issue is important so that neighbors will understand if there will be overhead or buried power lines, a solar farm or solar panels on roofs, or a windmill.
- Traffic Impact: Traffic at the intersection of Lake and Greenbush will increase due to the addition of up to 24 or more new vehicles with a statistically predictable number of trips per day. This is already a challenging intersection because of the nearby railroad underpass, so a study to determine the traffic impact on this intersection is warranted.
- Groundwater: Given recent issues with dry wells in this area of West Charlotte, a study should be undertaken to insure the availability of groundwater for a specific number of new homes without regard to the number of houses that would “fit” on that property. (See Marshall/Zappala)
- Runoff: The existing conserved area along Holmes Creek, and the lakeward watershed may be adversely affected by run off from road and housing construction and thereafter by ongoing maintenance of the roads and house sites (road salt, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) Any approved HOA bylaws must include regulations that address this issue. Then the question is whether those regulations will be followed and enforced.
- The Viewshed: The beautiful viewshed from the Charlotte Wildlife Preserve and adjacent roads will be irrevocably changed if a haphazard collection of houses, two or more large septic mounds, an improved road, overhead power lines or a solar farm, and light pollution from multiple houses are placed in a field that is currently home to a herd of cows.

In my opinion, the subdivision development as currently proposed leaves too much to the imagination, with lots 3-10 too dense for the area and the other sites and infrastructure (roads, power, septic) not clearly defined enough to be sure where and what they are intended to be. I urge the Planning Commission to reject this Sketch Plan and ask that the developers create a more detailed sketch plan and a revised narrative document that address and clarify some of the issues raised above and in other letters to the Planning Commission. It would be particularly helpful if the sketch plan provides more specificity showing building envelopes and road, power, and septic mound locations along with proposed plantings to mitigate the impact of this development on the viewshed.

Sincerely,

Garrett Sadler