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**GEORGIA PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**January 28, 2020**

*(As Approved by Planning Commission 2.11.20)*

**Board Members Present:** Greg Drew, Tony Heinlein, David Vincent,

**Members absent:** Suzanna Brown, George Bilodeau, Lary Martel.

**Please Note:** The Commission was advised after this meeting that its 3 members in attendance was insufficient to comprise a quorum, per its Bylaws. Thus, the Commission was unable to reach any decisions at this gathering. All topics and issues reported as discussed or decided in this draft do NOT have standing as official actions of the Commission, unless and until verified and voted upon by a quorum of the Planning Commission at a duly warned subsequent meeting of this body.

**Staff Present:** Larry Lewack, Planning Coordinator.

**Others Present:** Brad Ruderman, Engineer; Kevin Goebel, Enid Letourneau, Duane Letourneau, Cheryl Harton, Richard Lagro, Tom LaMothe, Keith LaValley, residents; Pat King, Jamie Cota & Keith Baker, Georgia Fire Dept.; Jim Jones (LCATV videographer)

Acting Chair Greg Drew called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. He asked if there was any general public comment, not pertaining to the hearing. Hearing none, he moved on to...

**Public Meeting, Sketch Plan Review:**

**PC-01-20: Sandy Birch Rd. LLC, Owner/Applicant, for a 14-lot residential planned unit subdivision,** located across from 1264 Sandy Birch Rd. in the AR-3 zoning district.

- Acting Chair Greg Drew read the project abstract into the record & swore the witness in.
- Brad Ruderman, Engineer, presented the project. Discussed what's changed on the site plan since the initial Sketch Plan presentation last spring. They propose a shared in-ground septic with individual drilled wells on each lot. Open space (Lot 13) to remain undeveloped forested land that could serve as a buffer & protection for invertebrate species. Lot 14 to remain undeveloped as a deferral lot. State wetland specialist did an on-site inspection & confirmed his mapped location of wetland buffer boundaries. House sizes as shown on site plan are 80x40'; may not actually be that large, but wanted to show how larger houses could be accommodated within those bldg. envelopes. To address concerns from PC re: wetland buffer on lot 6, added another 10' from 50' buffer line to house. Has not yet applied for state water and wastewater permit or stormwater permit; will also require Act 250 review, given the size of the project.
- David Vincent asked about the location of the subdivision. Greg Drew asked about nature of blue patches on map. BR: this is standing water associated with wetland complex. They are not proposing any crossing of the wetlands at this time. (Note: two easements on site plan to allow access to open space Lot 13 both require crossing wetlands, not clear how that works.) Tony Heinlein asked about this. BR: this is informal access, no road or trail is planned. Greg Drew asked if there was any plan to install sidewalks within the development. Asked Larry

48 if the town would require them? Larry: those discussions are still pending. BR: asked would  
49 town require them, in light of the fact that Sandy Birch Rd. currently has no sidewalks? Greg  
50 Drew: probably not, but we could require provision of ROW/easements for sidewalk along  
51 the proposed internal drive. David Vincent asked about emergency vehicle access,, and  
52 entrances into the development off Sandy Birch Rd. BR noted hammerhead turn-around at  
53 west end of internal road; two road access points, at main entrance & driveway for Lot 5.  
54 Tony Heinlein noted PUD open space requirement; needs a dedicated use. BR: has not yet  
55 been specified. Larry elaborated that in a PUD, open space needs to be accessible for some  
56 defined use for residents & nearby neighbors. Can be undeveloped. Not sure current layout  
57 of Lot 13 and the indicated ROWs provide that clear access. David Vincent asked how the  
58 hammerhead turn-around would be kept clear of parked cars for emergency vehicle access.  
59 No parking signs? BR: could be required in decision, though he hasn't heard that before.

- 60 • Tony Heinlein asked Larry to elaborate on item 7 in his staff report. Larry passed around  
61 several versions of site plans (from ArcGIS software and state Agency of Natural Resources)  
62 which show wetland extent much further north than Brad's site plan. Brad noted that state  
63 wetland specialist had done a survey on the ground & verified the delineation illustrated on  
64 his site plan. He claims state-generated maps often have errors. Tony noted recent complaints  
65 of dust arising from unpaved roads & asked if there was any plan to pave internal drive. BR:  
66 would be amenable to paving first 30 feet of the internal road, if required in the decision.
- 67 • Greg asked about possibility of phasing construction. Our development ordinance limits  
68 construction to 35 units/year (for entire town), with a 10-permit limit for any single  
69 developer in a year. BR: it will take time to build out the infrastructure, but isn't sure about  
70 the timing of building the houses, once the infrastructure is in place. David Vincent asked  
71 about impact of this project on schools. BR: this will be required as part of Act 250 review.
- 72 • Larry noted that the development would be less than 2 miles to the South Village center.  
73 There is current discussion about building out a linked network of sidewalks within the South  
74 Village. Right now, there is hardly any infrastructure in town for pedestrian & bicycle access.  
75 There is movement to require road widths which would allow adding a sidewalk in the  
76 future, should the town continue to move in the direction, that would connect with other  
77 sidewalks to allow safe routes for walkers & bikers. Would like to see this addressed better in  
78 preliminary plat. Also, the odd shape & lack of practical access to Lot 13 open space is a  
79 concern. Would have to cross wetlands by either current proposed ROW to get to Lot 13 in  
80 this site plan. BR: don't want to go to state wetlands specialist to get permission for a  
81 wetland crossing, if nobody's going to use it. Larry replied we have to look out for future  
82 users. We can't just assume they won't use it. But current layout would preclude any  
83 practical access to Lot 13 & that's a concern.
- 84 • David Vincent asked about depth & width of stream. BR: he doesn't know. Tony Heinlein  
85 asked again about extent of wetlands on Lot 13. BR: no more than 1-2 acres of that 12-acre  
86 lot is wetland. Greg Drew asked about culvert crossing Sandy Birch Rd.: Flow is north to  
87 south? BR: yes. Greg Drew asked if any other members of public had questions or  
88 comments. None were offered. Larry commented that according to the town development  
89 ordinance, major subdivisions have to be considered under PUD criteria.

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91 **David Vincent then moved to accept the application as presented & close the public meeting on**  
92 **this application. Tony Heinlein seconded, approved unanimously.** Brad Ruderman & others  
93 then left the meeting.

94 **Discussion with Georgia Fire Dept. leadership team:** Chief Baker, Deputy Chiefs Pat King, Jamie  
95 Cota were introduced for a general review of development regulations and Planning Commission  
96 practices re: accommodating emergency vehicles within site plan and subdivision reviews.

97 **Summary of topics discussed:**

- 98       ▪ **1000 ft. driveway limit:** they confirmed basis for this is the length of the longest fire hose the  
99 department owns, which is deployed when the house is distant from the water source. They  
100 can actually deploy other hoses with additional trucks a further distance along a driveway or  
101 access road. But as a general guideline, that continues to have merit.
- 102       ▪ **Emergency vehicle pullouts along driveways every 400-500 ft:** Also merited, in that FD has  
103 to set up relays to bring sufficient water supply to a fire site. With pull-outs, two trucks can  
104 pass each other when switching out an empty tanker for a full one. Their current capacity  
105 (for all trucks) is about 7,500 gallons—which could run out in just a few minutes if the hose  
106 were running at full capacity, to knock down a large blaze. Assumes the turn-outs are kept  
107 free of snow & parked cars... don't work if they're blocked by snow or other vehicles.
- 108       ▪ **Water supply challenges, given rural infrastructure w/ individual wells:** For the Georgia  
109 FD, their main source is two underground storage tanks located at the firehouse. Total  
110 capacity of 36,000 gallons. There are other sources around town (e.g. hydrants at the  
111 Industrial Park; dry hydrants linked to fire ponds & the lakes), but it eats up precious time to  
112 drive a truck back to the closest water source and then return to the fire to hook up hoses to  
113 the tanker. A typical large fire would trigger a mutual aid call to nearby towns' fire  
114 departments, who would bring their own full tankers to supplement the town's capacity.
- 115       Our development regs & current planning commission practice do not require developers to  
116 install dry hydrants next to water sources, or installing an underground storage tank. This  
117 could be required of developments over a certain size (say, 8 or more units), or a maximum  
118 distance from a water supply. They agreed to research NFPA standards & let us know.  
119 (adding this requirement would probably lower fire insurance rates.)
- 120       ▪ **Hammerhead or cul-de-sac turn-around at end of internal roads?:** needed to facilitate  
121 shuttle/ delivery of water supply to vehicles at the fire scene. Enables rapid turn-around if  
122 shuttling water, or safer turn-around to exit the fire scene. Cul-de-sacs accommodate easier  
123 turns, with a large turning radius for big trucks. Hammerheads are generally less effective  
124 because they are sometimes partially blocked by snow storage, or parked cars. Could be  
125 marked with 'no parking' signs to prevent blockage by parked cars, as a requirement.
- 126       ▪ **Sprinklers recommended:** generally required by state for commercial and multi-family  
127 housing structures, not required (but recommended by Fire Chief in most "ability to serve"  
128 letters) for single-family homes. Chief Baker feels cost-benefit ratio is reasonable for new  
129 construction. It added only \$4,000 to the cost of building his house. Given lack of town  
130 water in Georgia, sprinklers are fed by underground storage tanks where required/used.
- 131       ▪ **Building height restrictions:** At the moment, they don't own a ladder truck. They do have 2  
132 35-ft. extension ladders, but that's not high enough to reach above a 2<sup>nd</sup> story roofline, or to  
133 reach high points of buildings in the industrial park. Pending proposals could bring  
134 structures up to 120 ft. high. Nozzles to pressurize water can reach 100' now, not much  
135 more. Town is looking to purchase a used ladder truck soon; new ones are ~\$750,000.
- 136       ▪ **"Knox Boxes" for all commercial buildings and gates:** a universal key access to facilitate  
137 after-hours access. A safety issue because it takes additional time to open up ordinary lock

- 138 boxes; some are inside gates. Electronic key codes are impractical because they are  
139 frequently changed by building owners. Should be required for commercial bldgs.
- 140 ▪ **911 signs:** Every house should have one in a rural town. Fire Dept. waste precious time  
141 searching for unmarked houses because GPS is unreliable with poor mobile coverage. Chief  
142 Baker recommends we require them as a condition of getting a Certificate of Occupancy; we  
143 could fold the cost of these signs into the C.O fee.
  - 144 ▪ **Culvert widths where driveways join town road:** is currently being addressed as part of  
145 current zoning bylaw amendments. We are likely to tie new regs to state VTrans standards,  
146 to ensure large enough turning radii for large fire trucks.
  - 147 ▪ **Fire Chief sign-offs on conversion of summer homes to year-round use:** not very  
148 meaningful now, in his opinion. A zoning issue; could let go of this current requirement  
149 when we switch over to DRB review.
  - 150 ▪ **360 degree access for large buildings:** require hardened drive or permeable pavers all  
151 around a building, to facilitate all-around access by fire equipment. This will be an issue for  
152 upcoming developments in the South Village and industrial park.
  - 153 ▪ **Time frame for providing design feedback:** Ideally, Fire Dept. feedback should be solicited  
154 before Preliminary Plat hearing at the latest. Timely feedback is important because it can  
155 get expensive to redesign a project after lot lines are fixed with septic layouts. This can be  
156 addressed by staff in providing timely guidance for applicants following sketch plan review.
  - 157 ▪ **Compliance with standards:** most certificate of occupancy compliance is self-certification.  
158 We don't have the capacity to routinely inspect 'as built' compliance, other than what the  
159 state does for septic systems. Can send the Road Commissioner out to look at driveways,  
160 but this is not often done. We need to find ways to get better at this.

161 Greg Drew thanked the Fire Dept. leadership for coming in to meet with us. We agreed to invite  
162 them back, and look forwards to hearing their research & feedback on what was discussed tonight.

163 **David Vincent moved that the Commission enter into deliberative session at 9:17**, seconded by  
164 Greg Drew. Approved unanimously.

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166 **David Vincent moved that the Commission close its deliberative session at 10:04**. Tony Heinlein  
167 seconded. Approved unanimously.

168 *The following summarizes the Commission's non-binding discussion points from its deliberative session:*

169 Draft Leeuw Final Plat Amendment Decision and Order: Reviewed and discussed minor (typo)  
170 changes. Will need to come back to the Commission for a decision later, with a quorum present.

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172 Sketch Plan review for Sandy Birch Rd. LLC application: proposed conditions to include:

- 173 • Recommend classifying as a major subdivision, subject to PUD regulations.
- 174 • 12 residential building lots could work, but: consider making them smaller to minimize  
175 proximity to wetland buffers. (Note: under PUD rules, PC can grant waivers to reduce  
176 minimum lot size to ½ acre; these lots are proposed at .7 to 1.2 acres.)
- 177 • Construction must be phased; limited to building 5 homes/year per ordinance.
- 178 • Driveway access for Lot 5 to be relocated to access road; no curb cut to Sandy Birch Rd.
- 179 • Preliminary plat to show ROW/easement for future sidewalk along lots with frontage on  
180 Sandy Birch Rd., and along internal access road.

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- Reconfigure Lot 13 (open space). Current layout is inaccessible from inside & outside development due to L-shaped configuration and blocking by wetlands. Narrow ROW to Lot 13 from Sandy Birch Rd. around perimeter of Lots 6-10 doesn't provide useable access.
  - Other conditions as discussed.

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186 **Please Note:** following outside review, it was determined that the Planning Commission should not discuss or determine classifications of Sketch Plan Reviews or provide suggestions for applicants in deliberative session, only during open meeting. This shall be the Commission's practice, going forward. Meanwhile, the Sandy Birch Rd. classification will return for further (public) discussion at the next scheduled meeting of the Commission, given the lack of a quorum at this meeting.

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192 **Draft minutes of January 14, 2020 Planning Commission meeting:** since several members who were present at that meeting are absent tonight, we agreed to defer consideration of that draft until the next meeting. (Note: this draft is already posted on the town website.)

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196 **Motion made to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 p.m. made by David Vincent, seconded by Tony Heinlein.** The ayes were unanimous, the motion carried.

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199 **Selectboard Concerns:** It appears there is now another Planning Commission vacancy that will need to be filled by appointment, due to George Bilodeau's illness & planned resignation, because the time frame for nominating petitions for election to the Planning Commission has already passed. Also, please review the summary of our discussion with the Fire Dept. leadership for important considerations for pending zoning bylaw changes needed, and planning standards to be applied going forward.

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206 **Next meeting date:** February 11, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

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208 Respectfully submitted,

209 Larry Lewack, Planning Coordinator