

April 10, 2007

To: Planning Commission, city of Charlottesville
From: AKWieder, 2331 Highland Ave., Charlottesville, VA
Re: Huntley Development site plan of March, 2007

Seems to me that what is happening here is that the developer at Huntley has decided that the steep slopes on the property, which were always there it should be noted for the record, are no longer build able because the lots in question would required retaining walls.

And that the retaining walls would be ugly and no one would want houses on those lots. So now the developer of Huntley wants to take down even more trees, level some more of this challenging topography, (i.e. reduce the steep slopes involved) and get on with this project.

Lets take a look at the plan:

First of all, the amended site plan area is about 4 acres, just about 1/4 of this huge building site of 17-plus acres. In this 4 acre section the developer will build 30 houses. A storm water trench is planned to run along a ridge In the middle of this 30 house section.

This storm water trench will go in AFTER all the construction takes place. Sometime in the future. In the meantime some temporary sediment basins are being installed to keep the run-off from this site out of the Moore's creek, which is protected. Of course those sediment basins will be removed in three years. What will happen after that is anybody's guess.

But back to the plan: as I understand it this storm water trench will be built in a trapezoidal shape, and will have a pipe running through it. The trench will be filled with filtering rocks and other material and planted up with grasses and other growing things. This, combined with grass and trees and other plantings on the site, will all work together to handle the storm water and erosion run-off problems. And these are considerable, since the site is virtually clear cut.

There is no indication of what all the overall planting will be. And since the overall planting and landscaping on this site is critical to the success of this project, how will it look? It has a huge job to do, to take the place of everything that has been removed.

The city engineer says that the trench itself has to be "tweaked". What does that mean? Where is the plan for that? Where is the planting plan for the trench itself and the area around it? Will the city engineer show a revised plan? Will the developer's engineer show a revised plan? Will they

agree on the plan and plantings?

Who will maintain the trench? The city staff says that the developer will do so until the homes are in place and after that the Home Owners Association will care for and maintain the trench.

How will this work? Will only the folks living in the lots around the trench have to pay for cleaning out, replanting, maintaining the trench and the area around it?

Or will everyone on this 17-plus acre site have to foot the bill? Will this arrangement be written in the deeds for these houses? Will it be legally binding? If not, who will see to that?

Who will be responsible for making sure the Home Owners Association does what is required?

Is there an easement around the trench? Who will take care of that space? If the plant life in and around the trench is key to managing storm water run off, what will happen in droughts? The city arborist has said that the key elements in steep slope plantings are water and proper planting for trees. Who will see to this?

The reason this is so important is that the trench is the ONLY storm water and erosion control system on this site, except for the storm sewers. There is no storage tank on this huge property to tame and control water from the storm sewers. Such a storage tank would, among other things, allow sediment to settle before the water is discharged into Moore's Creek and tributaries.

Please review the particulars on sheet 3A of 17 for this amended plan. Note that the original steep slopes are being removed, re-shaped, re-done, to be less steep. Is this how the city ordinance of Jan. 2006 works? Is this permitted, is it permitted to get a variance on steep slopes by carving them up?

Please note the lot numbers indicated on this same page: lots 71, 48 and 41; lots 67, 50 and 40; lots 62, 54 and 37.

The cross sections indicated here show that even when the slopes are cut down they are still pretty steep. This means that the trench may be able to cut down some of the run off before it hits lots 48, 50 and 54. But what happens down hill of that group of lots?

And what about across the road, at lots 41, 40 and 37? Water will still be just running downhill. So stormwater, picking up pollutants from the

road, will be running down along to these lots and then into the tributaries below.

What pollution controls are in place overall? Lawn and tree fertilizing products, oil and gas slick from the roads, all will travel on down to the creek. The amendment does not handle this question at all.

I believe you might agree that the plantings, trees, shrubs, grass, all the greenery, are key to the erosion issues for Moore's Creek on this site. How can we expect these to thrive, and work collectively to maintain this landscape when the houses are packed together and 35 feet high?

If you have not been to this site I urge you to go there. I urge you to try to imagine how this site amendment plan solves the problems of stormwater run off, siltation, sediment and erosion control on steep slopes, as required by the Steep Slope Amendment.

Moore's Creek cannot defend itself or speak for itself. We are all stewards of this earth and the water supply. I ask that you reject this site amendment and require a better plan for this site.

(a copy of this letter was given to the clerk in order that it might be included in the public record)