

To: The Chatham County Planning Board
Re: Laurel Ridge 1B and 2B Final Plat and Application
Date: December 1, 2020

I am writing to you concerning the final plat and application before you for Laurel Ridge 1B and 2B, or The Estates at Laurel Ridge. I am a landowner who will be impacted by the Estates at Laurel Ridge development. I have lived in Rock Rest Rd., for 45 years on a hill above Dry Creek, and have deeded pedestrian access to the creek. This part of the creek is well known and loved for a deep and wide pool that has been a historic fishing and swimming hole for many many generations (the Rock Rest community was settled in the late 1700's). Dry Creek is a very scenic stream, but has often been threatened by pollution

I have been part of the Haw River Assembly's stream monitoring team on Dry Creek since 1995, and have worked for solutions to various pollution problems that result from runoff in the creek watershed during storms. These problems have included algae blooms from upstream agriculture, industrial contamination from Burlington sludge applications on pasture land, and most frequently, sediment pollution from upstream development. The worst of these sediment pollution incidents was during the initial development of Chapel Ridge, when a massive amount of uncovered disturbed land eroded into Dry Creek during a storm covering the creek bottom with up to 2 feet of sediment.

As clearing and roads have taken place for the development of Laurel Ridge, there have been several incidents that led to the county imposing Notices of Violation and a stop work order. My understanding is that these have included bulldozing in the riparian buffer (to the creek bank) and erosion of uncovered disturbed land areas.

With these problems already taking place, it is very unfortunate that the Estates at Laurel Ridge is grandfathered under current law and allowed to use the very inadequate pre-2008 regulations for riparian buffers and stormwater management. I believe that *extra* care and protections, not less, should be given when a development is being built on both sides of a creek, and especially a creek that has already been impacted by pollution, from development construction and other sources. What guarantee can the developer make so as to prevent future sediment erosion incidents occurring?

In addition, I have these specific questions, comments and recommendations:

1. I do not see actual locations of riparian buffers indicated on the plats for Laurel Ridge 1B and 2B. Although floodplains, water hazard buffers and wetlands are located, I do not see the 50' riparian buffer which of course would vary in width, depending on the grade upland of the creek bank.
2. The average lot size stated in the Application for Laurel Ridge 1B is 4.983. Is it not required to be an average of 5.0 or greater?
3. Laurel Ridge 1B Tracts 12, 13, 14 and 15 all have considerable wetlands, small streams, floodplain areas and a spring that should be evaluated further for degradation that could be caused by building adjacent to them. The historic spring and large bamboo grove (near a long gone and very old house site) on Tract 13 was bulldozed during original land clearing by the developer many years ago. The regeneration and renewal of the spring and surrounding bamboo grove should raise questions about its suitability as a housesite.

4. For Laurel Ridge 1B, I would suggest that in order to minimize pre and post construction impacts to Dry Creek that lots 12, 13, 14 and 15 be combined into one, or at most, two lots and that the land closest to the creek, which includes the spring, small streams, floodplain and wetlands be put in a conservation easement.
5. The configuration of tracts in Laurel Ridge 2B have the same issue of what could be excessive impacts to the the unnamed tributary of Dry Creek. It would appear that multiple tracts, on the eastern side of Blufftonwood Drive, would require stream crossings to reach building sites. I would again urge that the developer combine and reconfigure sites to minimize these stream crossings.

In closing I urge you, the Planning Board to not approve the Application and Final Plats for Laurel Ridge 1B and 2B until more information and protection are included for impacts to Dry Creek.

Thank you for consideration of these comments,

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