

Summary of Planning Board Recommendation to Deny Approval of Congruus Request to Add 184 acres to the CCO Map

November 1 2021

The Planning Board deliberated, during our September and October meetings, on the Congruus (Farrington Preserve) request to expand the area where compact communities are allowed in the CCO adopted in 2005. We voted to recommend denial of the request by an 8-3 margin. The reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

1. The request involves four parcels on Parker Herndon Rd ; two of the parcels are bisected by the current CCO map and two parcels (west of Parker Herndon Rd) are completely out of the map. The 2017 Comprehensive Land Use Plan expanded the area (East of 15-501) designated for compact communities but this expansion does not include the parcels owned by Congruus LLC. Adoption of the 2017 Land Use Plan was preceded by considerable input by the public, county advisory boards, towns and the business community. If expansion of the compact community area along Parker Herndon Rd is desirable and of benefit to Chatham County it should have been included in the Land Use Plan. The Congruus request is inconsistent with both the CCO ordinance and the 2017 Land Use Plan.
2. The Congruus request did not include a site plan so the Planning Board had no information on number of residences, types of residences, location of commercial, location of amenities, wastewater, open areas, natural areas, stream buffers, affordable housing plans etc. This is in contrast to the Vickers Bennett group who applied for a CCO map amendment at the same time as Congruus. The Vickers Bennett Group had a full site plan including location and size of all aspects of the development. In addition, the Vickers Bennett map expansion application was consistent with the 2017 Land Use Plan. The Planning Board majority felt that the area where high density development is allowed should not be expanded without a site plan available for county and public review. Chatham County compact communities allow for the doubling of density compared to R-1 zoning so the potential impact on the area and current residents could be significant.
3. Compact communities should have direct access to a major highway. This is the case for Briar Chapel and for the proposed Vickers Bennett and Herndon Farms applications which have direct access to 15-501. Congruus (Farrington Preserve) would have direct access to only Parker Herndon and Andrews Store Roads). There are now four schools and a county park on Andrews Store Road. Allowable densities along these roads should not be increased without a full site plan and traffic impact analysis.
4. Wastewater issues are a serious and growing concern in Northeast Chatham. It would be irresponsible to increase allowable densities without a clear and acceptable plan for how wastewater will be handled.

5. Pokeberry Creek is suffering from current developments. Congruus states that they will fix the problems with Pokeberry Creek. This would be great but we need to review how they will do it.

Congruus is free to submit a site plan along with a CCO map amendment request and the Planning Board would be glad to review it. However, we do not now have enough information to recommend approval of a request that is inconsistent with the Land Use Plan and the current Compact Community Ordinance.

Jon Spoon, Chair Planning Board

George Lucier, Vice Chair Planning Board