



Marshfield Planning Board

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: Planning Board
DATE: August 23, 2022
RE: Proposed Mill Creek 40B Application

The Planning Board has worked with the Housing Partnership for many years and have prepared and successfully presented to Town Meeting a number of zoning changes to allow for a greater range in housing choices in the Town. Starting with residential above commercial in Brant Rock Village Overlay at 13 units per acre, then residential above commercial in the PMUD at 6 units per acre, in the Downtown at 10 units per acre and creating an Affordable Village district allowing duplex, triplex and four-plex town homes in the PMUD with an affordable unit resale requirement. Marshfield already has the highest percentage (18%) of multi-family housing units in comparison to the five neighboring communities and has resident lot requirements that range from 10,000 square feet per home to one acre.

The Planning Board has actively worked and will continue to work on addressing the housing needs of the Town in a manner that doesn't overwhelm Town resources or a neighborhood. With regards to this development the Planning Board is also concerned with securing proper Town services and proper public transportation connections for the future residents of Mill Creek.

The Mill Creek Development is proposing to build 282 units (originally 300) of housing on 12.6 acres, which constitutes a density of 22.3 units per acre. This is almost double the density of the recently completed 40B now called The Madison (formally known as Modera) next door which was approved by your Board at a density of 12.6 units per acre. These two developments could add 530 units to a school district/area which has roughly a thousand existing multi-family units. This clearly over burdens one area of Town as it relates to schools, traffic and water use.

This development site is slightly below the high point of a large hill. In order to get to Public Transportation (GATRA) or the supermarket, shops, restaurants, or the schools it requires a walk of over 3,400 feet in distance and a change in elevation of 110 feet. This same hill with this amount of additional units also puts an increased strain on the water pressure for the existing residents of the Madison, the Seasons, Highland Green, Seth Sprague Drive and Old Woodlot Lane.

The Planning Board strongly supports the design changes provided by the planning staff as recently revised and provided to your Board. The Master Plan and previous Housing Production Plans stressed the need for affordable family housing in Town. In keeping with providing enhanced housing and better site design for our future residents the Planning Board recommends that the number of apartment buildings be reduced and replaced with more family-oriented town homes as shown on the revised site plan

provided by the planning staff. This revised site plan also allows for more open space as well as the opportunity for better grading and buffering. Due to the site plan presented to your Board and the almost total elimination of existing trees on the site the Planning Board recommends a thoughtful and well designed landscaping plan that buffers the development from the industrial district but also provides buffering between buildings in order to enhance the privacy of the residents.

The Planning Board also recommends the existing trail access and fire access to Town owned property (Sprague Forest) adjacent to the development be protected with fencing and improved access for hikers out onto Commerce Way. Currently, the property has an old fire trail running along its east and south borders and provides the access to Sprague Forest and other Town conservation lands. The proposed site plan for Mill Creek removes the portion of the fire trail on the property itself, but also closes off access to the Town forest by re-grading the existing entrance from Commerce Way. The Planning Board is very concerned that there is no other fire protection access to over 100 acres of steep sloping forest.

The Planning Board over the years has worked closely with the current property owner (VRT), the State and other local departments and Boards on addressing future growth and traffic impact to Route 139 (Plain Street). The MEPA process and local approvals set up a fair share traffic mitigation program for the entire Industrial/PMUD area. This property is part of a traffic agreement between VRT and the Town. As such the Planning Board strongly recommends the Zoning Board require this development to make a payment into the traffic improvement fund based on fair share trips, which calculates to \$96,428.

The Planning Board recommends that the applicant provide enhanced transportation opportunities for the future residents that include a GATRA bus shelter on-site and a yearly contribution to GATRA to allow bus service up Commerce Way. Marshfield has its challenges for residents who either do not drive or do not have the financial means to own their own vehicle, therefore it is important when trying to attract residents to Town that there be some sort of transportation provided.

In summation the Planning Board recommends the ZBA approve with conditions the proposed 40B development at a density no greater than 190 units. The planning staff will be available to assist the Zoning Board of Appeals with drafting conditions to address the numerous concerns and recommendations identified above.

Thank you for your extensive work and consideration of all the issues on this application.

Sincerely

Marshfield Planning Board
Michael Biviano, Jr., Chair,
Katie O'Donnell, Vice Chair,
Fred Monaco, Member
Nik Pappastratis, Member
Kevin Cantwell, Member
Scott DeCastro, Assoc. Member