

Planners OK Utilities For Development

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HARRISONBURG — The city's Planning Commission has given the go-ahead for a proposed development in Rockingham County to connect to Harrisonburg's water and sewer lines.

Chairwoman Deb Fitzgerald, City Councilman Richard Baugh, and Commissioners Jefferson Heatwole, Gil Colman and Judith Dilts voted in favor of the application. Commissioners Henry Way and MuAwia Da'Mes were not present.

The proposed development would add between 24 and 28 townhouses in the 300 block of Vine Street, just outside the city limits.

According to city documents, Cosner Construction of Broadway is looking to build the homes on a parcel of land at 331 Vine St.

The land, rezoned from general agricultural to general residential in 2010, is part of a 2-acre parcel owned by Virginia State Free Will Baptist Church.

A proposed site plan from 2010 shows 24 townhouses, with the planned entrance to the property on Vine Street. According to Rhonda Cooper, Rockingham County's director of planning, the developers have not submitted a site plan.

She said the utility connections must be approved first and included in the submission. Cooper said city officials will be involved in the final review of the plan because the main access to the property is from a city street.

A memorandum from Harrisonburg Planning and Community Development says the developers also must work with the city's Public Works Department to construct the driveway and sidewalks on the portion of the site facing Vine Street. At Wednesday's meeting, senior planner Alison Banks said the utilities department did not see any issues with the connections.

However, in the application, Mike Collins, director of public utilities, said the water pressure was "adequate, but customers may desire boosters." Fitzgerald said the commission usually approves utility extension requests, but the advisory panel needed to consider the impact on city residents.

"These are generally a good thing, unless they affect the city residents that are already there," she said. "There's a lot of development floating around the edges of the city, and I imagine we can't do this forever."

But Adam Fletcher, the city's director of planning and community development, said those issues are generally addressed by the time a request is sent to the Planning Commission.

“If there’s an issue, public utilities will take it up before [commissioners] get the request,” he said. “We don’t get to this stage in the game without their approval.”

The application will be taken up by City Council at its June 14 meeting. Once approved by council, developers can begin work on a site plan. There is no timeline for construction of the development.

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