



◊ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission ◊

Gordon Myers, Executive Director

Jeff Jones
Planning Director
Town of Pittsboro
Hillsboro Street
Pittsboro, NC 27102

November 29, 2016

Subject: Additional Elements to the Chatham Park Master Plan

Dear Mr. Jones,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the submitted Additional Elements to the Chatham Park Master Plan. The NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) reviews development plans to provide recommendations on ways to reduce impacts of major development on fish and wildlife populations. Habitat loss and fragmentation are the top threats to most of our state's wildlife species; impacts on wildlife populations can be reduced by identifying sensitive natural areas and species ahead of major development design and incorporating protection for these natural resources into the design. The following recommendations are provided to enhance natural resources and wildlife habitat protection in some of the Additional Elements to the Chatham Park Master Plan, as submitted on May 9, 2016.

Development Phasing

The Development Phasing Element provides some guidelines on how to build infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the Chatham Park development. To enhance protection of fish and wildlife in the Chatham Park development, infrastructure should be planned to avoid development in high priority natural areas.

Open Space

The Open Space Plan included in the Additional Elements provides a laudable purpose statement for the using open space in Chatham Park for the protection of natural resources, including water quality and wildlife habitat. The plan, however, does not provide much guidance on how these purposes will be fulfilled using the open space in Chatham Park.

The Open Space Plan, as submitted, does not provide much more information than the Chatham Park Master Plan. This is a concern to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, as Chatham Park could potentially isolate high priority natural areas into small blocks that do not provide adequate resources and connectivity to maintain healthy wildlife populations. The development may also limit hunting opportunities and wildlife habitat management activities on the NCWRC Jordan Lake Game Lands. We recommend that the Open Space Element address how to protect and connect large natural areas throughout the development and to provide for a natural

area buffer surrounding NCWRC Jordan Lake Game Lands in Sections 2.2, 2.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.7 of the development. The NCWRC recommends that large natural areas be connected with a minimum of 150' wide wildlife corridors. Habitat management activities and hunting can persist on game lands, if they are buffered from development by at least 450 feet.

The Open Space Plan also does not address management needs of open space. If land is to be set-aside for its important natural resources, it is imperative that steps are taken to ensure that those natural resources are being managed for the future. The NCWRC, as well as many other conservation partners, can provide assistance in developing habitat management plans.

The proposed Natural Resources Conservation and Open Space and Recreation Areas ordinances, if implemented, will address all of the objectives listed in the Open Space Element. In addition, it will also:

- Improve wildlife habitat protection as it will address the need for habitat connectivity,
- Buffer and connect existing protected lands, including NCWRC Jordan Lake Game Lands,
- Provide a transparent and clear methodology for ensuring that the highest priority natural resources are protected, and
- Require that open space be managed and maintained for its intended open space purposes

It is the recommendation of the NC Wildlife Resources Commission that the Town of Pittsboro implement the proposed Natural Resources Conservation Ordinance and Overlay District and the proposed Open Space and Recreation Areas Ordinance to assist Chatham Park in meeting its stated Open Space objectives.

To improve the submitted Open Space Plan, it is recommended the developer involve stakeholders to identify and describe the species, habitats, and water resources of highest priority, describe the threats these resources face, and develop specific goals, objectives, and strategies to implement protection. Local conservation partners, including NCWRC, can help Chatham Park develop an Open Space Plan that provides guidance to ensure that natural resources are protected for the future residents of Pittsboro.

Landscaping

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission commends Chatham Park for its stated intent to not plant any exotic invasive species in Chatham Park and to use native Piedmont species whenever possible. The use of native plant species supports the conservation of biodiversity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Chatham Park's Additional Elements. Please feel free to reach out to me with further questions.

Sincerely,



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Please note: These comments are intended to assist developers and decision makers to proactively minimize adverse impacts to wildlife resources. Although following these measures may help development projects meet requirements of applicable environmental permits, these comments are not regulatory in nature, and do not represent all measures needed to meet requirements of environmental permits, where required for development. These comments may also not address all concerns of the NCWRC regarding this plan.