[EXTERNAL MAIL]ZAJ-23-1 - Gifft Hill Road / Ari Goldschneider

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To: Leia LaPlace <leia.laplace@dpnr.vi.gov>

Good day Ms. LaPlace,

My comments on the proposed rezoning for the parcel on Gifft Hill Road, St John, are below.

DEFECTS IN THE PUBLIC NOTICE AND DOCUMENTS

The public notice stated that the purpose of the rezoning was to allow for operation of a "boarding house." This was corrected during the public hearing and the purpose was restated to be for a "Guesthouse" however this should have been corrected prior to the public hearing.

The drawings submitted by the applicant and distributed by DPNR prior to the hearing showed features which the applicant stated are not actually part of the proposal. These included a restaurant trailer in the front of the property, an owners apartment trailer on the property, and a different parking configuration than was shown on the drawings. The drawings did not include any details on the proposed size or location of septic systems. As such, the documents available for public review did not reflect what was actually being proposed.

PARKING

The zoning code states that "one off-street parking space shall be provided for each ... transient guest room or separate residential accommodation ... in any district." The proposed use for 72 separate residential accommodations will require 72 parking spaces, not only by code but by practical considerations. The units are intended to be for "workforce housing" and the jobs of these tenants will not all be within walking distance of Gifft Hill Road. The applicant stated that he does not intend to provide parking for each of the residential accommodations, however this is not allowed under the zoning code and would require a variance.

The Applicant has said that he does not intend to pave the parking areas. The code requires that "Any off-street parking area for more than five vehicles or for any use in the TABLE OF PERMITTED USES ... shall be surfaced with a properly bound pavement so as to provide a durable and dustless surface." An unpaved parking lot for 72 vehicles will generate a tremendous amount of dust. If the applicant does not intend to pave the parking areas then this would require a variance.

WATER

At an average of 1-1/2 persons per unit (per code) and average water usage of 50 gallons per person per day (standard low usage), the 72 proposed units will consume 5,400 gallons per day. This will generate over 5,000 gallons per day of waste water and require, on average, one water truck delivery per day. The effluent from the septic system will need to disperse 5,000 gallons of water every day which, with Type 3 soils, will require a leach field of 25,000 square feet, or 0.57 acre at 0.2 gallons per square foot per day. Between the footprint of the structures and the required parking and access there is insufficient open space to accommodate this amount of waste water. This is one of many reasons why R-4 density should only be allowed in places where public sewer systems are available.

PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC ON GIFFT HILL ROAD

The road shoulder between the site and the closest public transportation at Centerline Road is not safe for pedestrians. I have driven that road numerous times and there are blind turns, and many places where the shoulder is narrow or non-existent, forcing pedestrians into the

roadway. It does not appear practical for sidewalks without significant impact to landowners. The applicant's statement that renters who do not have assigned parking will be able to walk to and from public transportation and that he would work to have sidewalks installed does not seem at all practical or feasible.

FALSE CLAIM THAT THIS WILL BENEFIT ST JOHNIAN FAMILIES

The applicant claims that this project will benefit St Johnians by freeing up apartments that are currently being used by transient workers. I do not find this to be a credible statement. If five individuals are sharing a 2-bedroom apartment it is highly unlikely that they would move into individual rooms, rented at \$1500 per room per month, for a total rent of \$7500 per month. These single-occupancy rooms are far more expensive than a shared apartment.

AVAILABILITY OF R-4 ZONED PROPERTY IN CRUZ BAY

The zoning map indicates that there are a number of undeveloped tracts of R-4 zoned land in close proximity to Cruz Bay town. These sites would be far preferable for a group dwelling as proposed by the applicant. They are within walking distance of public transportation and are serviced by public water and sewer services. The applicant cannot demonstrate that he has no viable alternatives to the rezoning - it is simply his preference to construct a project which is not allowed under the current zoning designation.

Furthermore, it is my understanding and belief that Mr. Goldschneider has always intended to rent the units as separate accommodations, not under a single master lease for a single "family." The approval for the first two cluster units was inconsistent with his stated plans to provide workforce housing. This, in my opinion, was disingenuous of the applicant - to apply for a building permit and accept a permit that he knew, or should have known, would not be suitable for his intended purposes. He never intended to build two "residences" - he always intended to build 24 - 72 (or more) separate apartments, and his initial renderings showed kitchens in each unit.

For these reasons I believe the zoning change should not be allowed, and the existing permit should either be revoked, or the applicant should apply for a use variance to rent 24 individual units under the currently approved permit.

Thank you, David Silverman

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