

Council denies rezoning in Fry's Spring area

written by Newspark Team | June 19, 2012

Charlottesville's City Council voted Monday to deny a rezoning that would have allowed a developer to build seven single-family homes at the end of Eton Road, a cul-de-sac in the Fry's Spring neighborhood. Without the rezoning, Alex Hancock will only be able to build two or three homes on the property, according to city planner Brian Haluska. The "planned unit development" Hancock sought would have allowed for more homes to be built closer together.

Denials of rezonings are relatively rare in Charlottesville.

"Typically, applicants will defer or withdraw their applications prior to things getting this far because of the one-year waiting period on re-applying once you receive a denial," Haluska said.

However, Hancock has already asked for a deferral once before, when it appeared that the Planning Commission was ready to deny the project in October 2010.

When he reappeared before commissioners in May, nine members of the public spoke out against the project. They cited concerns about the loss of woods, additional traffic and a development that was out of character with existing homes.

The Planning Commission recommended 6-0 to deny the rezoning because it did not meet PUD standards. The City Council followed suit.

Phone calls to Hancock were not returned.

MACAA negotiations

In other news, the City Council also voted to enter into "friendly" negotiations with the Monticello Area Community Action Agency to acquire a portion of land for the Meadow Creek Parkway interchange.

"This is a property that we have appraised at \$80,791 and we've been in conversation with MACAA and they believe the property has more value than that," said Jim Tolbert, the city's director of neighborhood development services.

Under the terms of the negotiations, the city will put money into an escrow account that MACAA can access. The move allows the project to stay on the city's schedule while a price for the land can be agreed upon.

The city is hoping to advertise the \$33.5 million project for construction bids in August. Construction will take two and a half years.

Health care for councilors

Council also amended the city's code to allow its members to opt in to the health-care program provided for other city employees.

As of July 1, the city will contribute to enrolled councilors \$506 a month toward medical benefits and \$ a month for dental coverage.

All employees pay a premium based on the plan they choose. Those councilors who opt out of the coverage are eligible, but not required, to take the payment as compensation.

It is not yet known which councilors will participate in the program or take the opt-out payment, according to Galloway Beck, the city's human resources director.