

# Tie vote on building design delays Trader Joe's written by Newspark Team | November 22, 2011



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Developers of Stonefield, a mixed-use development along U.S. 29, ran into a minor roadblock in the form of a rare tie vote from the Albemarle County Architectural Review Board on Monday.

The four board members in attendance reached an impasse over the use of white-colored brick on the Trader Joe's building slated to be built at the intersection of U.S. 29 and Hydraulic Road.



*Albemarle Architectural Review Board member*

*Chuck Lebo compares material samples for Trader Joe's*

Board members Charles Lebo and Paul Wright voted in opposition, having long expressed disapproval with the use of white brick on the Trader Joe's building, which they described as giving the building a monolithic appearance and clashing with the community's character.

"I've stated in the past and I'm stating it now: I'm looking for a more earth-toned brick color," Lebo said.

However, the board found difficulty in suggesting an alternative color choice. Bruce Wardell and ARB chairman Fred Missel expressed concern that choosing a different brick color could cause the building to stick out from the rest of the development.

"I think putting red brick on that corner or tan brick on that corner would be like a cartoon," Wardell said.

Developers said that the white brick color was important because white is perceived as a good color choice for retail businesses and because it is in keeping with the contemporary appearance they are seeking in the design.

Members also disagreed over what the board had specifically decided at its previous work session. At that meeting, the board asked for changes to the plan to use white painted brick at Trader Joe's.

"The one thing we asked, the one thing that they've never bent on was the white color on the corner," Wright said. "And that was agreed to at the time and that's what moved Chuck and I [offer] forward. It's revisionist history to think of anything else."

While Lebo sided with Wright's interpretation, Missel, Wardell and the developers said they thought that the recommendation was not against the color white, but simply to use unpainted brick.

Wardell brought a vote to approve the use of white colored but unpainted brick, and the vote failed 2-2. Board members recognized that the issue would have to be readdressed at the following meeting when the full board was present.

Bill Daggett, the final board member who was not in attendance, has previously expressed support of the choice of white brick for Trader Joe's, making it likely that the material will ultimately be approved. Developers seemed willing to try again at the next meeting.

"It would probably be a different outcome here today if the full board were here," said Tom Gallagher, a principal developer of the project. "But we'll just have to wait and figure that out."

Board members noted the rarity of split decisions by the ARB.

"Just so you know, 99.9 percent of the time that I've been on this board, which is now 10 years, we usually are unanimous in our votes," Lebo told developers. "You're creating history here at the ARB."

Modifications to the plan for building A-5 along Hydraulic Road were also discussed now that Pier 1 Imports has been identified as its future tenant. Developers said that Pier 1 is planning to relocate from its current storefront further up on 29.