

## **(More) Q&A: Summerfield Farms Village**

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SUMMERFIELD - Summerfield leaders are starting to examine the pros and cons and gauge support for developer David Couch's proposal to extend water and sewer lines from the city of Greensboro to Summerfield Farms.

Couch, CEO of Blue Ridge Cos., said he needs water and sewer service to pursue residential and commercial development on his 650 acres around Summerfield Farms, where he operates a wedding venue and a market selling grass-fed beef and other local products. Couch's cattle graze and wildlife flourish on the rolling pastures and woodlands in the heart of Summerfield, running west from Pleasant Ridge Road, crossing Brookbank Road and ending at I-73.

Couch, who lives on the property with his wife, Stephanie Quayle, said he wants to negotiate a development agreement with the Summerfield Town Council to allow for construction of a range of housing - from condominiums and townhouses for sale and rent to single-family houses priced from \$250,000 to \$1 million and more.

In a presentation to the council in September, Couch said he would install fire hydrants and build public trails in his development, referred to as Summerfield Farms Village, while maintaining some grassy and wooded areas as natural preserves.

The proposal has drawn opposition from residents who are opposed to denser "planned development" that they believe would congest roads, crowd schools and imperil Summerfield's rural character.

Couch's plan requires the backing of Summerfield's council, as well as the city of Greensboro, which would run water and sewer lines and operate the systems. In addition, Couch wants Guilford County to establish a special tax district that would charge property owners in his development - not all Summerfield taxpayers - for water and sewer services.

The following are responses we gathered to additional readers' questions about

Couch's proposal:

Q: Summerfield Mayor BJ Barnes and Town Manager Scott Whitaker met last month with Couch and his representatives and Greensboro and county officials to discuss the developer's proposal. What was the outcome of the talks?

A: Barnes and Whitaker discussed two meetings Sept. 22 - one with city officials and a second with county officials - in posts on Summerfield's website, [www.summerfieldnc.gov](http://www.summerfieldnc.gov). To read their comments, click on the News & Notices tab and tap the link to the Summerfield Farms Village Concept.

In summary, Whitaker described the meetings as an effort to assess "the multi-jurisdictional interest of all parties."

Representatives of "each jurisdiction had questions and relayed their stance that a collective effort would be necessary for such a large-scale project, but neither party (the city or county) pushed to lead," Whitaker said.

The parties asked "questions about the needed mechanisms, particularly related to the proposed special tax district" that would be required to act on Couch's proposal, Whitaker said. He added that lawyers representing the municipalities plan to talk further about tax districts.

In an email earlier this week, Whitaker said he and the mayor didn't depart the meetings with a call to action by town staff or the council.

"We didn't leave the meetings planning to request any debate or action from council at its Nov. 10 meeting," Whitaker said. "Staff isn't seeking any action and has received no formal submissions about Mr. Couch's development concept."

In his website post, Barnes said Couch is proposing "a village type development" that he describes as an "agrihood" that would encompass "the rural charm of Summerfield, is buffered from surrounding areas and includes trails, open spaces and rural vistas."

Commercial areas within the development would feature businesses such as shops, medical practices, grocery and restaurants, according to the mayor. A senior living facility is another possibility, he said.

"His problem is this plan would require water and sewer to negate the need for multiple wells and large septic fields," Barnes said, prompting Couch to propose creation of the special tax district where occupants "would pay double the rate for water and sewer than Greensboro residents pay. This fee schedule would finance the water and sewer provided by Greensboro."

Leaders attending the meetings think the concept is "good, but it was still in the concept stage (and) there are many details that need to be worked out," Barnes said.

Greensboro and county officials said the project wouldn't cost their taxpayers and could possibly generate revenue for their municipalities, he said.

Summerfield is required by state law to review and consider Couch's proposal based upon the town's comprehensive plan, Barnes said.

"Our responsibility is to make sure the growth which is coming will be controlled and in the best interest of Summerfield," he said.

"Many have voiced their opinion, based on their reluctance to see any development, period," he said. "Many have voiced their approval based on the positives of water and sewer, including protection of aquifers and fire protection.

"I reiterate: this is just a plan and council has nothing before it to consider at this time," Barnes said. "I feel council is taking the right steps in educating itself and considering the pluses and minuses of such an undertaking."

Q: What are the considerations for the city of Greensboro?

A: Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan said city officials are in "the preliminary stages of verifying capacity and cost" of providing water and sewer services to

Summerfield Farms.

"First and foremost, we need to insure that we have enough capacity for future growth and that the proposed Summerfield expansion will not come at a cost to Greensboro residents," Vaughan wrote in an email to Summerfield resident Dwayne Crawford earlier this month. "Additionally, the Guilford County commissioners will have to be financial partners to help pay for the infrastructure before the Greensboro City Council will consider the utility expansion."

Q: Would Couch's development mark the first time Greensboro has sold water and sewer services outside of the municipality?

A: It would not be the first time, according to Greensboro City Manager David Parrish. "We routinely sell water to a small portion of Burlington and to Jamestown when their demand is high," he said.

Greensboro also treats wastewater from a small section of Burlington's service area while providing wastewater service in parts of Pleasant Garden as the result of Greensboro's previous water and sewer agreement with Guilford County, Parrish said.

On an emergency basis, Greensboro can sell water to Reidsville and High Point while buying water from those two towns, he said. The city also has plans to provide water and sewer services to the Guilford-Randolph "megasite" near Liberty if economic recruiters are successful in securing a major manufacturing company to set up operations there.