

Will half the number of apartments fly?

In his latest proposal, landowner David Couch is betting Summerfield's Planning Board and Town Council will be open to fewer apartments

by CHRIS BURRITT

SUMMERFIELD – Will Summerfield leaders be more receptive to landowner David Couch's proposal to build about 600 apartments – half the number the Town Council rejected last year?

Couch, owner of Summerfield Farms, is preparing to find out when he returns to the town's Planning Board on Thursday, Jan. 26. Town staff is relocating the board's meeting from Summerfield Community Center to Summerfield First Baptist Church in anticipation of a big turnout and a large number of speakers during a public hearing on Couch's proposal.

The board will forward its recommendation to the Town Council for a final decision on whether to approve Couch's request for a text amendment to Summerfield's development rules. Last April, the council voted 4-1 to deny the developer's request, reflecting council member Janelle Robinson's belief that "the overwhelming majority of you don't want apartments and high density."

During remarks before the council's vote last April, Couch didn't sway opposition, even though he made a last-ditch effort by offering to cut the number of apartments by half. Since then, he's twice repeated the concession – in his new text amendment application last May and in a Dec. 20 letter to Summerfield's council members.

Couch wants to transform his 973 acres that span across town into the Villages of Summerfield Farms, a collection of 11 neighborhoods

with small businesses and a mix of housing such as apartments, duplexes, cottages, traditional single-family houses and luxury homes.

"We have not changed our overall vision for this strategically located grouping of development sites," Couch wrote last month to Summerfield council members. "But we have revised the text amendment in response to listening to Town Council, the Planning Board, and to Summerfield residents."

Without identifying the locations, Couch said he would build apartments in two places. That's down from four sites in his previous application, which proposed complexes at three corners of the Interstate 73 and N.C. 150 interchange and a fourth between Summerfield and Pleasant Ridge roads.

After conducting a mailing in November to about 4,800 Summerfield property owners who were asked to take an online survey, Couch said respondents in the "Let's Talk Summerfield" survey expressed "overwhelming support for careful and managed growth. The responses received verify that we are on the right track with the revisions we have made and confirm what we have already learned."

The survey has collected more than a third of the goal of 1,000 responses, according to Misty McCall, executive director of development for Villages of Summerfield Farms. She urged others to complete the survey at the link letstalksummerfield.com.

In his letter to Summerfield's council last month, Couch addressed criticism by individuals and groups such as Stand Up For Summerfield. On its Facebook page, the group has urged the council to reject Couch's request for the creation of a new zoning district in the town's unified development ordinance (UDO).

Opponents are "asking that our current UDO be upheld and no

...continued on p. 6



You Are Here. So Are We.

Remarkable care that keeps you healthy everywhere.

With Novant Health, you can expect:

- Convenience with 26 locations from Oak Ridge to High Point
- Access to primary care and pediatrics, heart, orthopedics, women's health and more
- World-class hospital care at Novant Health Kernersville Medical Center

Expect Remarkable.

Find a provider near you.
Visit NovantHealth.org/Guilford

NOVANT
HEALTH

© Novant Health, Inc. 2022
10222 - SEM-1033956

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

...continued from p. 5

Stephenson said. "We want it to be a desirable destination venue where the elementary school can have events, the town can host music in the park events, and more. We want it to be the best it can be," he emphasized.

"This money came from federal funds and if we don't use it, we have to return it – so, we want to make the most efficient and the wisest use of this money, to benefit the most people as possible," Stephenson said.

want to go?

Attend the meeting and public forum on Jan. 5, 7 p.m., in person at Stokesdale Town Hall, 8325 Angel Pardue Road, or view it on the Town of Stokesdale's YouTube channel. Questions or comments may be directed to Tee Stephenson at tstephenson3@nc.rr.com or to deputy clerk Robbie Wagoner at deputyclerk@stokesdale.org.

In our business, a closed session is scheduled for the end of the special called meeting. According to the meeting agenda, the purpose is to "consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or, to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee."

HALF THE APARTMENTS?

...continued from p. 3

apartments be permitted in Summerfield," the group said on its Facebook post last May, its latest post.

In his letter to Summerfield's council last month, Couch referenced the criticism and clarified what he called misinformation about the process that would ultimately allow him to develop his property.

As a first step, Couch is asking the council to amend the UDO to create a new zoning district, OSM-V, or open space mixed use – village. In exchange for higher-density housing, Couch has proposed preserving pastures, fields and other scenic views on his property, including Summerfield Farms.

Higher-density housing would require the extension of water and sewer services to the project, according to Couch. Villages of Summerfield Farms homeowners – not other Summerfield residents – would pay for the additional utilities, he said.

If the council approves the text amendment, Couch would be required to gain approval for rezoning of his property and negotiate a

development agreement with Summerfield that would govern design and construction of his project. The process would trigger public hearings before the Planning Board and the council.

Couch also addressed a concern among some residents that he'd develop his property quickly, leading to pressure on schools and roads and threatening Summerfield's rural character.

In his application, Couch said he'd build one apartment complex at a time. He added that he wouldn't build apartments "immediately adjacent" to traditional subdivisions of single-family detached houses. Duplexes, triplexes and quadruplexes wouldn't fall under that restriction.

"Development of each area would then require detailed site planning and approvals with a 20- or more-year buildout," he added in his letter to council members.

want to attend?

Summerfield's Planning Board will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, to hear landowner David Couch's text amendment request. The meeting will be held in Summerfield First Baptist Church's community life center, 2300 Scalesville Road.

Virtual Care from Your Home

All **LeBauer HealthCare practices** are offering virtual care appointments with your provider through a video visit. In-person appointments are also available.

Connect with the healthcare provider that you know and trust from the comfort of home. Virtual appointments are billed to your insurance just like your regular office visits. Schedule your appointment at lebauer.com or call your provider's office today.



LeBauer HealthCare
Partnering for exceptional care.

lebauer.com

ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS

Call today for an appointment with one of our providers!