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MEMO

To: Development Review Staff & Hearings Examiner
City of Camas

From: Jeremy Fick, PE
Robertson Engineering, PC

Date: March 28, 2017

Re: New Lacamas Heights E.S. – Title 17 Land Development - Exceptions Request

Introduction

The New Lacamas Heights Elementary School project is located on a 40-acre parcel northeast of NE 232nd Avenue and NE 9th Street. The project includes frontage improvements consisting of a new half-street sweeping through the site. This has been identified as a 3-lane minor arterial. This arterial will be both extended to the east and widened to the south in the future by others. Preliminary design of the project's frontage improvements have led to identifying several exceptions to the City of Camas' standards. CMC 17.23.010(B) states "An application for any exception from this code shall be submitted in writing...substantiating facts and evidence pertinent to the request." This memo specifically identifies all requested exceptions and how the City of Camas's Municipal Code (CMC) and Comprehensive Plan are satisfied.

CMC 17.23.010(A) states "...exceptions from the requirements of this title may be granted when undue hardship may be created as a result of strict compliance with the provisions of this title. Any authorization for exception may prescribe conditions deemed necessary or desirable for the public interest." CMC 17.23.010(A)1.a-c. indicate that the applicant must show that the strict application of the provisions of this code would deprive the applicant of the reasonable use or development of the land, the exception is necessary to insure such property rights and privileges as are enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and under similar circumstances, and the granting of the exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property in the vicinity.

It's important to take a step back and review the site constraints of this 40 acre parcel to appreciate the efforts made by the school district to completely avoid or greatly minimize impact to the archeological areas, the wetlands and their buffers, the onsite streams and their buffers, the power lines and their buffers, the protected white oak trees and their habitat, the mature forested areas and the steep slopes in siting the proposed elementary school and its associated improvements. Add to the on-site constraints the City's necessary upgrade of the existing rural road designations to 3 lane arterials on two frontages and the necessary extension of public utility services to the site and it is not surprising that the school district is asking for minor exceptions. The school district has met regularly with City planning and engineering staff in designing the public improvements for this site. The proposed school will be nestled into a truly remarkable location with a new roadway that arcs through the site. It will be the western gateway to the City's north urban development corridor. Care has been taken to address the ultimate design of the entire roadway so that not only

are the currently proposed half street improvements feasible, but the future extensions to the south and the east are planned for as well. The school and its associated improvements will be an asset to the City and will provide the backbone for future development north of lake.

All of the exceptions identified herein are due to special circumstances, and are proposed with the public interest and adjacent property owners in mind. There are exceptions to the typical roadway section, the longitudinal slope of the roadway, and the creation of a new parcel.

Exceptions to the Typical Roadway Section

City of Camas Detail ST5 identifies the typical cross section for a 3 lane collector/arterial. The first exception request is in response to the City Parks Department's desire to incorporate a regional trail into the project. The City's 2014 Open Space Comprehensive Plan shows a future trail in the vicinity of the project site. Also, the Pre-Application Notes requested the inclusion of a T-27 trail or trailhead in the project. Through further discussions with City staff, it was agreed that eliminating the detached 6' sidewalk in exchange for a 10' wide asphalt multi-modal path that meanders through the site would better serve the public. The multi-modal path would extend from the eastern boundary of the site toward a parcel created with this project dedicated for future public use (see further description of the parcel below). This alternate design provides greater separation from the arterial for pedestrians and bicyclists than the standard layout. Additionally, the alternate trail alignment allows pedestrians and bicyclists to traverse less total grade change than a detached sidewalk adjacent to the proposed public roadway. The multi-modal path complies with CMC 18.18.060(A), which requires compatibility with the comprehensive plan and 18.18.060(D), which requires adequate provision of parks and trails.

The second and third exceptions to the typical section are targeted to preserve the maximum number of mature trees alongside the new roadway. The project proposes to eliminate the street trees and tie into existing ground with a 2:1 slope on the north side of the road between approximate stations 12+70 and 15+70. CMC 18.31.080(B) states "To the extent practical, existing healthy significant trees shall be retained. Preservation of groups of significant trees, rather than individual trees shall be preferred." Significant trees are defined in CMC 18.03.050 as evergreen trees greater than eight inches in diameter. Making these two modifications to this portion of frontage roadway improvements will save a group of significant trees. The project does not desire to cut down mature trees just to plant new small trees. The steeper slopes will be planted with groundcover that will grow and control erosion over the long term, and will not need to be mowed.

Exception to the Longitudinal Slope of the Roadway

A maximum grade of 6.75% is proposed in order to best match the existing topography, representing a 0.75% increase over the standard maximum. CMC 17.19.040(B)(12) states that "Grades shall not exceed six (6) percent on major and secondary arterials." Although it is a small change to the standard, we are requesting an exception to this requirement because this small difference projected out for several hundred feet makes a large difference in grade. Meeting the 6% limit would result in:

- Excessive cut and/or fill for the current and future projects, affecting multiple property owners, significant trees, and wetlands. CMC 17.19.040(B)(12)(b)(ii) allows greater slopes in order to minimize impact to critical slopes. As noted above, CMC 18.31.080(B) encourages the saving of significant trees.

- Challenging vertical connectivity at other properties at final build-out (up to 10 feet of cut at existing driveways if the standard is strictly adhered to). CMC 17.19.040(B)(12)(b)(i) allows greater slopes when it allows better connectivity to a through street or adjacent (larger) neighborhood. Although the neighborhood would likely not be considered large, it is an existing condition and will eventually develop. The regional existing topography and critical areas are the “special physical circumstances or conditions affecting the property” as listed in CMC 17.23.010(A)(1)(a) that allow the change to be reasonable. The granting of this change will not be detrimental to adjacent properties, however not granting this change would be detrimental [see CMC 17.23.010(A)(1)(c)].

As a comparison, Clark County design standards allow for grades up to 8% in rolling terrain, which is more descriptive of the existing terrain on and adjacent to the project site. The grade west of the large sag vertical curve is dictated by existing grades on NE 232nd Avenue. Therefore, if the grade is not slightly adjusted, there will be disproportionate impacts to adjacent properties and critical areas.

Full-Width vs. Half-Width Roadway

CMC 17.19.040(B)(12) requires all interior public roadways to be built to full width. This memo documents that the proposed public road is not an interior roadway, but a frontage roadway. The project is dedicating all land south of the roadway to the City so that it becomes a frontage road as a result of the project. The intent is not to develop both sides of this roadway, but one side. The existing parcels to the south will also front this new roadway.

Northwest Corner Parcel Dedication for Public Purposes

CMC 17.01.030(B)(3) includes an exemption of provisions for a division of land resulting from a public dedication. The school district, as a public agency, stated its intent to dedicate the northwest corner of the parcel for public purposes in its land use application. The district will retain ownership of the property while continuing discussions with the City regarding valuation and future use. Future use considerations will include an easement for a storm line and stormwater pond maintenance access, the option for a future secondary access to the school site for buses, and a City trailhead and/or public service annex. It is expected that the requirements of Title 17 will be met upon the development of this parcel for public purposes in the future.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence, Code citations, and Comprehensive Plan criteria identified above, this memo respectfully requests the approval of the following roadway design exceptions for the new Lacamas Heights Elementary School project:

1. Trail in lieu of sidewalk
2. No street trees and 2:1 side slopes from approx. 12+70 – 15+70, Left
3. 0.75% increase over maximum allowed longitudinal slope

This memo also documents the rationale for half width roadway improvements and parcel dedication for public purposes.