

New Smyrna Beach City Commission Meeting – Feb.8, 2022

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City Commissioners voted unanimously to approve changes for two proposed Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) on opposite sides of town – one for a seven-story hospital with 300 beds and medical facilities near I-95 and the second for a 77-unit townhouse project on Saxon Drive.

Officials agreed site plans for both projects would come back to them for review instead of the customary final oversight by the city's Planning and Zoning Board.

The PUD for the proposed Oakwiler upscale townhome development concerns 6.9 acres of undeveloped, forested land on the east side of Saxon Drive, between Third Avenue and Seventh Avenue. It is immediately south of the Publix supermarket.

The property previously was earmarked for a mixed commercial-apartment project called Hog Eye Camp Road Square. That PUD's Master Development Agreement (MDA) called for a project of 150 apartments in five-story buildings and 16,420 square feet of retail space. The developer of the proposed Oakwiler townhome development initially requested that the MDA be changed to allow 83 townhouses. That later was reduced to 77 townhomes in two-story and three-story buildings.

In addition to the above changes to the existing Hog Eye Camp Road Square MDA, the Oakwiler project developer also asked the city to change the site's future land use designation from Commercial to High Density Residential.

Chief Planner Jeff Gove advised Commissioners the Planning and Zoning Board recommended that the city approve both of the Oakwiler development requests with several conditions "because this is a significant decrease in density" from the old zoning and land uses allowed on the site.

Commissioners included a number of Planning Board and staff members' recommendations in their approval of the Oakwiler development changes, as well as some requirements that arose from their own discussions. Those recommendations included:

- ✓ Ensuring only 77 townhouses will be built.
- ✓ Prohibiting short-term rentals.
- ✓ Locating the proposed two-story buildings on the side near the single-family residential neighborhood along Seventh Avenue (instead of the three-story buildings).
- ✓ Relocating a proposed sealed trash compactor along the north side of the property adjacent to the Publix rather than a lot that backs up to a home along Seventh Avenue.
- ✓ Reducing required setbacks with landscaped areas along Saxon Drive to 42 feet if the county doesn't require a turn lane into the development, and 28 feet if it does.
- ✓ Not allowing any access from the Oakwiler project onto Seventh Avenue.

Gove said one complicating issue is that Volusia County owns Saxon Drive, and the road's right of way only includes its pavement. An existing bike path is on the Oakwiler property/. Glenn Storch, an attorney representing the Oakwiler project, said if the path has to be dug up to bury utilities it will be rebuilt.

Currently, New Smyrna Beach officials are in talks with the county about the possibility of the city taking over Saxon Drive.

Commissioner Jake Sachs said he saw, "in all honesty and candor, a possible negative impact ... next to the residential neighborhood. I already see Saxon Drive as heavily congested. I can foresee problems, but I do support some type of building there." He also expressed concern about stormwater runoff on the site, although Sachs acknowledged the plans call for runoff to be retained there.

Storch answered, "We're reducing the density and reducing the height. We're proposing to take away all the commercial uses ... We have done our best to incorporate environmental standards, green building standards. We have preserved a number of specimen and historic trees by using tree wells to be sure they survive. Our HOA will be in charge of maintaining these trees with an arborist. We will encourage the use of electric vehicles with charging centers in each garage. We will be minimizing grass, and using Florida native landscaping ... This is something people will be proud to live in. It will include a clubhouse, pool, park areas, a dog park and shaded walkways."

A civil engineer associated with the Oakwiler project added his firm did some preliminary analysis on the development's stormwater requirements and they were fortunate to have good soil conditions that percolate stormwater rapidly. The stormwater collection and retention system will be underground, he added.

After hearing complaints from a resident whose home would have been right behind the proposed location of the sealed trash compactor, Commissioner Sachs and Vice Mayor Jason McGuirk asked the developer to consider moving the compactor to the property's border with Saxon Drive or Publix – an agreement that was incorporated into the Commission's motion for approval.

Mayor Russ Owen commented that residents often drive by the site of a proposed development and judge it based on what it looks like today, not its approved development.

"New Smyrna has obviously changed in the last decade," Storch told Commissioners. "We believe the city can support a luxury townhouse development. It has better aesthetics and design, and is better suited for the area" (than the high-density, commercial-apartment project that previously was approved for the Oakwiler site).

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The new AdventHealth New Smyrna hospital and associated medical uses is planned for part of a 106.3-acre tract consisting of four separate parcels that previously were part of the Coastal Woods PUD. The plan is to build a seven-story hospital at the northeast corner of SR-44 and I-95, bordered on the east side by Sugar Mill Drive.

AdventHealth sought to extract the entire plot from the existing Coastal Woods development and create a new PUD Master Development Agreement and Conceptual Development Plan for a hospital and a related medical-retail complex. Commissioners voted to approve that request, adding they wanted to be sure the hospital's helicopter will not fly low over nearby residential neighborhoods, and its cell tower should be placed as far away from nearby homes as possible.

Gove, the chief planner, said Advent Health's plans includes a 30,000-square-foot Emergency Department, 140,230 square feet of medical offices, a 100-room hotel, a 100-

bed Assisted Living Facility and about 40,000 square feet of retail use. He added that Coastal Woods developer Geosam and AdventHealth both have agreed to widen Sugar Mill Drive along the AdventHealth frontage to four lanes prior to a certificate of occupancy being issued for any building in the AdventHealth PUD.

Gove said the most significant change requested for the Advent PUD is the maximum building height. The Coastal Woods development allowed for a maximum height of 60 feet. AdventHealth would retain that 60-foot limit on most of its acreage, but in the area where the new hospital would be located AdventHealth sought approval for a maximum building height of 135 feet.

Gove and Borron Owen, an attorney representing AdventHealth, said the increased height was needed because state building codes require taller than usual ceiling heights on many hospital floors.

Commissioner Sachs noted he had asked that AdventHealth develop a "heavily landscaped campus with appropriate-sized trees to be conducive to good health in a holistic manner," and Advent representatives said they would do that.

Borron Owen assured Sachs and his fellow Commission members that AdventHealth wants "to create a healing environment... We appreciate you encouraging a heavily landscaped campus. I think you will find us a receptive and willing partner." He added that he couldn't yet provide a date for construction to start on the new hospital and medical facilities. In addition, the attorney volunteered that AdventHealth recognizes its existing, downtown hospital is a valuable community asset, and "we know that part of our relocation must include discussions and decisions with you about what happens to the property we will be leaving ... The results of these discussions will most certainly play a role in the timing of the construction of a new hospital to serve our community."

Advent Health does not own the land or the building of the local hospital. It leases the facility from the Southeast Volusia Hospital District. The new hospital will cost several hundred million dollars, Borron Owen said, and AdventHealth is "committed to working with the city in achieving our mutual design intent. We recognize the importance of being part of the community in look and feel."

Mayor Owen (who is no relation to the AdventHealth representative) also emphasized the importance of the hospital's design. "I'm really passionate about the building itself. This will be a landmark building, not only in our entrance and our gateway, but really in our entire community. I challenge you all to bring us your best. Bring us something that's timeless. I want something that we will be really, really proud of when we drive by."

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