Public Improvement Variance – Rice Road Park

TO: Matthews Planning Board Members
DATE: June 19, 2018
FROM: Mary Jo Gollnitz, Planner

Matthews Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources is beginning development of a 9.5 acre tract of land along Rice Road. The property is zoned R-12 and R-15 and the park is being developed by right.

Matthews Parks and Recreation is required to start construction before January 2019 in order to fulfill requirements for the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant (PARTF) received in 2013 to purchase the land. Budgetary constraints are necessitating the development of the park in two phases.

The first phase will include driveway access into the park, an onsite walking trail, one sidewalk connection from Rice Road into the park, playground facilities, parking lot, lighting, benches and picnic tables, as well as landscaping.

Parks & Recreation is requesting a Public Improvement Variance as follows:
  Delay until Phase 2 of park development:
  • the installation of a widened street pavement (approx. 905 ft. of street frontage);
  • construction of curb and gutter;
  • construction of storm drainage improvements;
  • replacement of the existing 5’ sidewalk along Rice Road frontage with a 10’ multi-use path;
  • building a second connection of multi-use path into the park; and
  • installation of required street trees.

Matthews Unified Development Ordinance Section 155.712.A directs the Planning Board to determine if unnecessary hardships result from the strict compliance of the regulations, and then recommend to the Board of Commissioners whether to approve the Public Improvement Variance.

Planning and Public Works staff are comfortable with a delay of all requested installations until Phase 2 construction.

Staff suggests that the Planning Board forward a favorable recommendation for the Public Improvement Variance as submitted to the Board of Commissioners.
DATE: June 13, 2018

Planning Department
232 Matthews Station Street
Matthews, NC 28105

TO: Kathi Ingrish, Director

Applicant: Town of Matthews, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resource Department

Public Improvement Variance: Variance request related to public improvements along Rice Road associated with Rice Road Park Project

Explanation: The Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resource Department respectfully requests a public improvement variance, delaying improvements to Rice Road as part of Phase I development for this project. Improvements described include road widening, curb and gutter, and storm drain installation and widening sidewalk in the project area. The applicant requests to make these improvements part of Phase II development on the site. The project plan elements that would remain include a flared concrete apron connection to Rice Road, and the existing 5’ sidewalk would remain as pedestrian access into the site. See illustrations attached.

If approved, Phase I will include construction of a walking trail, playground area, parking lot, sidewalk connection from Rice Road into the site, and driveway access into the site from Rice Road. Other Phase I amenities include parking lot/playground lighting, benches, picnic tables, and landscaping within the park site. Phase II of the park project would include construction of a picnic shelter on site, an expanded multi-use path along Rice Road, and one additional pedestrian connection from the multiuse path to the playground area within the park. The road improvements previously mentioned to be removed, would be completed as part of this phase.

The primary motivation for this request is budgetary. The current economic climate of construction has resulted in project bid costs rising greater than 40% above budgeted funding for the project. The park will serve as public space for citizens, free of charge for public use. There is no mechanism to generate the additional dollars specifically from this site, to meet the existing gap between funding and actual project cost. Reduction of the project scope for phase I through elimination of the road improvements, creates a project that is feasible for construction at this time.

The Town of Matthews is under agreement with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, through award of Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant funding. Funds were awarded to the Town for purchase of the described project property in 2013. The agreement stipulates that the Town begin construction of this park project by January 2019. Removing the road improvements would allow the Town to comply with this stipulation outlined in the PARTF grant program.

A precise timeline for phase II construction has not been determined. The project will be evaluated annually as part of the Town of Matthews Capital Improvement Plan and overall budget process. Phase II will be initiated as funding becomes available. The Town is fully committed to making the described improvements to the park and road as part of phase II development on the site.

Thank you,

Corey King, Director
Matthews Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resource Department
AREA IMPACTED BY PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT VARIANCE REQUEST.

Rice Road Park and Road Expansion
2540 Rice Road,
Matthews, North Carolina 28105

PLANT MATERIAL
PLANTING REQUIREMENTS
UTILITY ISSUES
GENERAL
ADDITIONAL NOTES

ALL SHAPED REGIONS WILL BE REMOVED FROM ORIGINAL SID AND BUILT IN PHASE 2.

EXHIBIT 1

LEGEND