Agenda Item: Public Improvement Variance – Rice Road Park

DATE: July 2, 2018
FROM: Mary Jo Gollnitz, Senior Planner

Background/Issue:
- Matthews Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resource 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 the requirements of NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant received in 2013 to purchase the land.
- Budgetary constraints are necessitating the development of the park into two phases.
- The first phase will include driveway access into the park, 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.
- Rice Road is a Town-maintained street.

Parks & Recreation is requesting Public Improvement Variances delaying until Phase 2 park development the following:
- installation of a widened street pavement (approx. 950 ft. of street frontage);
- construction of curb and gutter;
- construction of storm drain 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;
- installation of required street trees;
- Phase 2 will include installation of a picnic shelter.

Comments:
Planning and Public Works staff are comfortable with the delayed timing of all requested improvements until Phase 2 construction.

Planning Board requested that signage be posted prior to the park’s driveway entrance for safety reasons. Parks & Recreation Director Corey King has stated that he will look into the request and appropriately address the concern.

Proposal/Solution:
Allow the Public Improvement Variance request for installation of curb and gutter and storm drain improvements, widening of road, replacing sidewalk with a multi-use path, secondary multi-use path connection and street trees along Rice Road.

Related Town Goal:
Public Safety
Economic Development/Land Use Planning

Recommendation:
- Planning Board unanimously recommended approval of the Public Improvement variance request with the condition that funding for these improvements be secured within 24 months.

Staff recommends Town Board approve the Public Improvement Variances as submitted.
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

www.matthewsnc.gov
Rice Road Park and Road Expansion
2540 Rice Road, Matthews, North Carolina 28105

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09.14.17

PLANT MATERIAL
PLANTING REQUIREMENTS
UTILITY ISSUES
GENERAL
ADDITIONAL NOTES

EXHIBIT 1

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

LEGEND

PLANT SCHEDULE

EXHIBIT 1