

Developer seeks changes to town requirements

By Alex Bridges

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The firm behind Front Royal's recent annexation wants the town to relax some of its development rules for a housing project.

David Vazzana, with the Front Royal Limited Partnership, filed requests with the Department of Planning and Zoning seeking to amend the town's zoning ordinance. The developer seeks changes to the requirements on lot sizes and setbacks.

The Planning Commission intends to discuss Vazzana's request at a work session in August. Director of Planning and Zoning Jeremy Camp advised the commission about Vazzana's requests at a meeting this week.

The town's zoning ordinance requires a minimum lot size for property in the R-1A residential district, Camp said Friday. Vazzana is asking that the town create an average minimum lot size.

"So there might be some lots smaller than that but, if there are, there's gonna have to be lots larger than that," Camp said.

"Ultimately it allows him to be more flexible at least in the design. It might allow it to be a little easier to cluster the lots together."

Front Royal Limited Partnership owns approximately 100

acres that it plans to develop into housing. Proffers included with the approved rezoning limit the development to 320, single-family dwelling units, Camp said.

The firm also owns 604 acres the town added through a boundary adjustment and voluntary settlement agreement with Warren County. The 604 acres remain zoned for agricultural use, but Vazzana has indicated a desire to ask the town to rezone it for development. The voluntary settlement outlines conditions for the development of the 604 acres, including limits on how many homes the developer can build on the property.

The developer sought the ordinance changes in 2009 during the rezoning process for the 150 acres but withdrew the request at that time.

The ordinance amendment as proposed focuses on diversifying the sizes of the lots in the development and relaxing some of the setback requirements, Vazzana explained by email Friday. Reducing the setback requirements allows the developer more flexibility in where they place a home on a lot. For instance, moving the home closer to the street while recessing the garage puts the emphasis on the house and creates a larger backyard, Vazzana noted.

The developer also has asked the commission to consider allowing it to set up a mixture of 5,500, 7,000 and 8,500-square foot lots.

“None of us are exactly the same so why should our neighborhoods be one size only?” Vazzana posed.

While the developer has not requested any changes to the required street widths, Vazzana said he plans to address this in the future. Vazzana commented that the town has many neighborhoods with wide streets. He noted that some people prefer wide streets while others want narrower, neighborhood roads.

Vazzana also filed a request with the department to amend the proffer statement submitted with the previously rezoned, 150-acre property. As Vazzana explained Friday, the proposed changes serve mainly to clean up the language of the original proffer statement. The proposal does not call for any major substantive changes to the statement.

Proffers are voluntary contributions, sometimes in the form of cash to offset the cost of development, or conditions, such as construction benchmarks, offered by the developer on a project. Developers often submit proffers with a rezoning application.

The requested amendment to the proffers would apply to the 150-acre site. Vazzana said build-out of the property would occur in six to 10 years at the earliest. The developers need to work with the commission and department staff on the amendments to the proffers and the ordinance before they can begin the site-planning and engineering on the site — a 12- to 18-month process.

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