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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY**
**PLANNING COMMISSION**

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 13, 2024

Ms. Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager
Lower Gwynedd Township
1130 North Bethlehem Pike
Post Office Box 625
Spring House, Pennsylvania 19477

Re: MCPC # 24-0122-001
Plan Name: Whitefield
(1 lot comprising approximately 15.6 acres)
Situate: 1348 Sumneytown Pike (cross street: Evans Road)
Lower Gwynedd Township

Dear Ms. Worman:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on May 17, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

## BACKGROUND

The applicant, Genterra Corporation, is proposing a ten-lot subdivision and residential development. The property currently contains one existing dwelling, which would be preserved as a single-family dwelling. The other nine lots would be developed with single-family residences, resulting in a total of ten dwelling units.

Forest Drive is an existing cul-de-sac street that connects to Evans Road via Sunset Drive. Forest Drive would be extended to the north to accommodate the proposed residential lots. Eight of the proposed lots would have frontage along and have access from the proposed cu-de-sac road, one of the units would have frontage along Sumneytown Pike but would take access by an access easement over Lot 5, and two of the lots would have frontage along and access from Evans Road.

The property is currently heavily wooded and contains wetlands over much of the area. The property is located in the A Residential District and is served by public water and sewer.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The proposal is generally consistent with the county's comprehensive plan*, MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision,* which shows the area as being located in the "Suburban Residential" future land use areas. Suburban Residential areas consist primarily of single family detached homes. Residential development should match the character and type of housing found in the immediate neighborhood, and environmentally sensitive land should be preserved.

## RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified the following issue that the applicant and township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### NATURAL FEATURES

The property currently contains woodlands and wetlands. The wetlands are a tributary of the Trewellyn Creek and are locally important for water quality and natural habitat. The proposed development would disturb large areas of woodland and wetlands. The following comments are meant to help guide the protection of the natural features to the greatest extent possible (as per § 1230.48).

A. Wetlands. The proposed development would site units and driveways on top of existing wetlands. For Lots 8, 9, and 10, walls are proposed along the driveways that would cross the front yards of the lots. Dividing wetlands with walls will result in the wetlands being detached from their water source and eventually drying up. Wetlands are important ecosystems that should be protected from development. To protect the wetlands and ensure they remain connected, we recommend that where driveways and Forest Drive are proposed through the wetlands, culverts be provided under the driveways, as well as other protections.

   1. Tributary. Based on the existing features plan, there is a tributary on Lot 3. A house is proposed to be developed in the location of the existing tributary. We recommend the applicant consider an alternate site plan for Lot 3 that would locate the house elsewhere.

B. Tree Preservation. The proposed development would remove many trees, including trees growing in and around the wetlands. The habitat that exists in a wooded and wetland area would be destroyed. While the proposed development plan appears to preserve clusters to trees along Sumneytown Pike, we strongly encourage the applicant to consider a layout for the development that would minimize the amount of tree removal. The township's subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) requires that each tree with a caliper of six inches or more shall be "replaced with a shade tree or shade trees… which have a total caliper equal to or greater than the tree removed" (§ 1230-41(i)).

## LANDSCAPING

A. Street Trees. The proposal includes planting 27 street trees along Forest Drive. Based on the landscaping plan provided, it appears that a Tree Protection Fence would be provided along a portion of Forest Drive. Street trees provide shade and contribute to the natural habitat. We recommend planting additional street trees where there are gaps between trees along Forest Drive, as well as along long driveways on Lots 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

    1. Evans Road. Trees would be removed for the two lots that would have access from Evans Road; however, there do not appear to be trees proposed for the new front yards of the two lots. Street trees on Evans Road would add shade and support the local habitat. In addition, trees would help to create a buffer between Evans Road and the new residence.

B. Woodland Edge. In wooded areas, when trees are removed during development, a new woodland edge is create and exposed. To help reestablish the woodland edge and support a healthy ecosystem, we strongly encourage the applicant to plant as many trees and shrubs as possible along the new edge of the wooded areas that are planned to be developed.

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The stormwater management plan for the proposed development includes subsurface basins throughout the site. Due to the presence of wetlands in this area, we recommend the applicant integrate green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bioretention basins, to capture and infiltrate runoff. Rain gardens and other similar green stormwater management strategies improve water quality, which is critically important for bodies of water that flow to the Wissahickon Creek.

A. Naturalized Basins. We recommend that the applicant consider using the stormwater management facility to create a naturalized meadow-like habitat that can be an amenity for the residents. In order to create a naturalized basin, we suggest the stormwater facilities be larger and shallower with gently sloping sides that adhere to the topography of the area, and could function as a natural meadow that feeds into the wetlands. The township's subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) requires that stormwater management facilities, including detention basins, meet the standards of the Stormwater Management Ordinance (SALDO § 1230.32).

## PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

The property has frontage on Evans Road and Sumneytown Pike. It is recommended in *MontcoPikes: A Vision Plan for 6 County Roads* that along this portion of Sumneytown Pike "sidewalks should be added on both sides of the road. Bike lanes are also recommended along this segment (pg. 6-6). We recommend providing sidewalks as part of this development to enhance the pedestrian network and improve access to Spring House Shopping Center, Gwynedd Mercy High School and University, and to the Trewellyn Trail.

## CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Lower Gwynedd's planning objectives for low-density residential development in environmentally sensitive areas.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files. Please print the assigned MCPC number (24-0122-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,



Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner
Claire.Warner@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3755

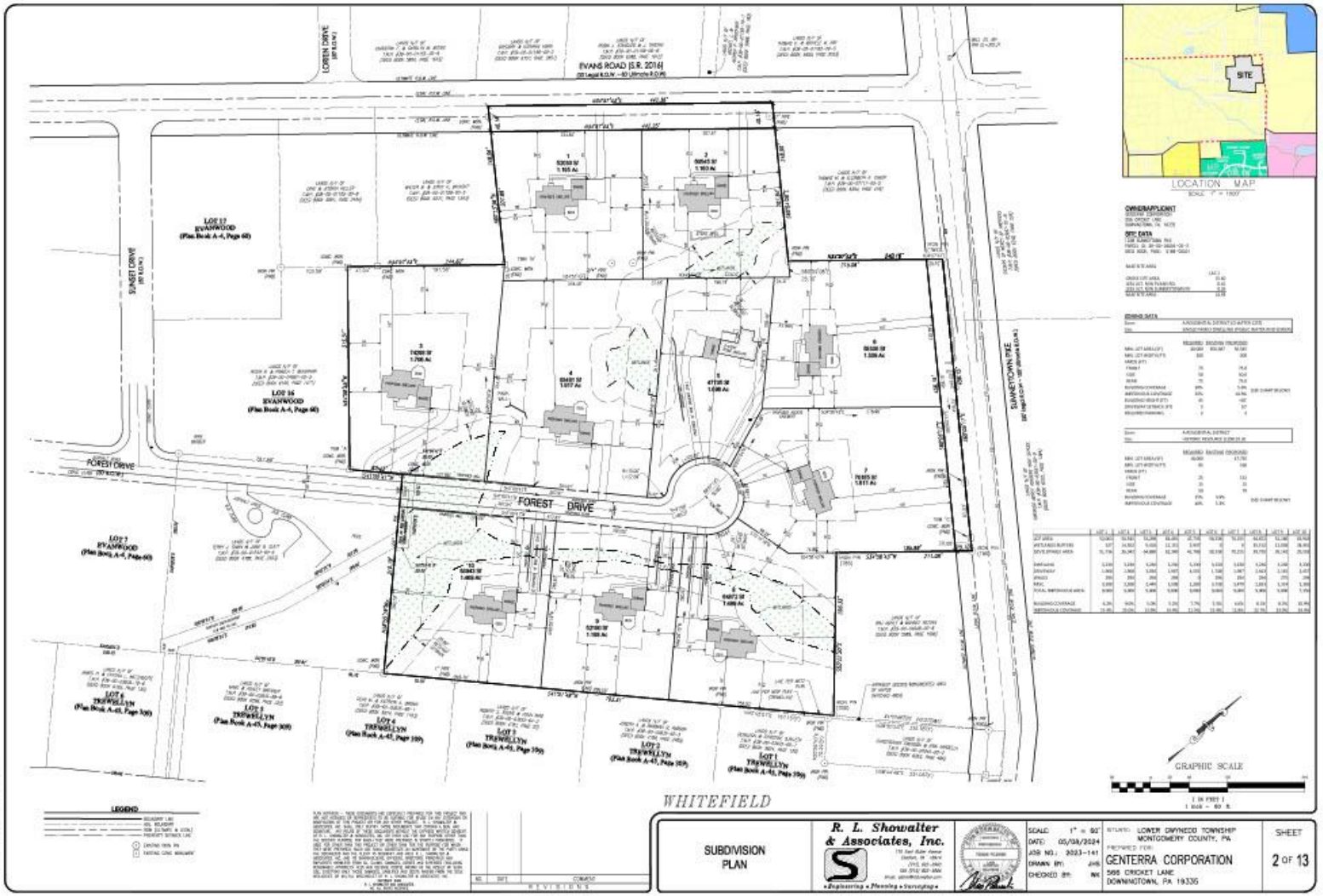
c: Genterra Corporation, Applicant - chuck@inlanddesign.net
Wayne Kiefer, Applicant's Representative - wkiefer@rlshowalter.com
Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Kenneth Amey, AICP, Township Zoning Officer
Craig Melograno, Chairman, Planning Commission

Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan

## ATTACHMENTS A & B




Whitefield
MCPC#240122001


EVANS ROAD (S.R. 2014)
LORRAN DRIVE
SUNSET DRIVE
FOREST DRIVE
SUNNYTOWN PIKE
LOT 12 EVANWOOD (Plan Book A-4, Page 60)
LOT 16 EVANWOOD (Plan Book A-4, Page 60)
LOT 7 EVANWOOD (Plan Book A-4, Page 60)
LOT 6 TRAWELLYN (Plan Book A-43, Page 309)
LOT 5 TRAWELLYN (Plan Book A-43, Page 309)
LOT 4 TRAWELLYN (Plan Book A-43, Page 309)
LOT 3 TRAWELLYN (Plan Book A-43, Page 309)
LOT 2 TRAWELLYN (Plan Book A-43, Page 309)
LOT 1 TRAWELLYN (Plan Book A-43, Page 309)
WHITEFIELD
SITE
LOCATION MAP
GRAPHIC SCALE
LEGEND
SUBDIVISION PLAN
R. L. Showalter & Associates, Inc.
Engineering • Planning • Surveying
SCALE: 1" = 80'
DATE: 05/08/2024
JOB NO.: 2023-141
DRAWN BY: JHS
CHECKED BY: RLS
LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA
PREPARED FOR: GENTERRA CORPORATION
595 CRICKET LANE DOWNINGTOWN, PA 19335
SHEET 2 OF 13