MEMORANDUM

August 22nd, 2024

To: Planning Board
From: Planning Staff

RE: Rezoning Application R24-06
Portions of: Dan Hunsucker, Hunsucker Farms LLC, Mahoney & Wilcox Revocable Trust Properties
3709 Rock Barn Rd (Catawba County PIN 375206378536)
3728 Rock Barn Rd (Catawba County PIN 375211558910)
3769 Rock Barn Rd (Catawba County PIN 375206479503)
3223 John Daniel Dr NE (Catawba County PIN 375210364087)
Applicant: M/I Homes of Charlotte
Application date: 6/19/2024

Background:

Acreage: 160.38 +/- acres

Current Zoning District: R-20 (Catawba County Residential).

Current property use: Vacant, agricultural

Uses allowed in R-20 (Catawba County Residential) district:

Agriculture & accessory uses, residential and accessory uses on half acre minimum lots including single-family homes, duplexes, mobile home park (restricted), churches, schools, family childcare homes, adult care homes, limited outdoor recreational uses

Zoning and use of surrounding properties:

a) North – R-20 (Catawba County - Residential)
b) South (south of I-40)– R-20 (Catawba County- Residential), B-3 (Claremont - Commercial)
c) East – R-20 (Catawba County - Residential), B-3 (Claremont - Commercial)
d) West – B-2 (Highway Commercial), R-20 (Catawba County - Residential)

Additional District Information:

These properties either are in or are adjacent to a Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD). On VADs, Catawba County says: *"The agricultural district program is a voluntary opportunity for farmers to have their land identified as a farming district. By having land designated as a district, the farmer lets the community know that he is actively engaged in farming and to expect the various types of activities which are associated with a farm. This program is not zoning nor is it a regulatory process."*

These properties are also located in a Watershed Protected Area (WSPA), which limits the maximum amount of development allowed to occur on the site.

Streets & utilities:

The site has access to city water along Rock Barn Rd. The nearest sewer connection is along Rock Barn Rd, approximately 1200' southwest of the intersection with St. John's Church Rd.

The most recent traffic counts for Rock Barn Rd east of St. John's Church Rd is 4,400 trips/day. The count for west of St' John's Church Rd. is 5,600 trips/ day.

There are currently no City maintained streets in this area.

Environmental impacts:

The property is mostly open farmland and has some steep wooded slopes on the eastern side. A small tributary of McLin Creek runs along the western border of the subject property through open land and wooded areas. The property owner has dedicated conservation easements along the stream.

Future land use map designation:

The Land Development Plan (LDP) map shows future land use for this property as both low to medium density residential and medium to high density residential development, with a small portion of the western area designated as industrial development.

Requested zoning map amendment:

Requested zoning district:

NR (Neighborhood Residential)

Proposed use:

Single family homes on lots that could be a minimum width of 50' per lot.

Uses allowed in new district:

NR allows single family homes, as well as multi-family (with Conditional Zoning approval), churches, schools, family care homes, family child care, parks, libraries and government uses.

Is there a community need for this zone/uses in the zone?

The City currently has a need for more housing options. Most of the developments that the City has approved are townhome/attached dwellings of varying densities or single family homes on small lots (Wagner Glen). The development under this zoning would likely be similar to the current D. R. Horton development in the Cline Village neighborhood.

Potential impact of new uses on surrounding property owners:

The current zoning of this property would allow a maximum residential development density of somewhere below two dwellings/acre. The proposed zoning would allow for a maximum density

of somewhere in the four to five dwellings/acre based solely on the math. The actual maximum density, when accounting for terrain, stormwater, stream buffer area, open space, etc., is likely to be around four dwellings /acre or less.

Despite the size of the property under consideration, there are few residential neighbors impacted directly by future residential development of this property; only six residences are immediately adjacent to the property.

Given that there are no major streams or flood zone areas on this property, the fact that it is in WSPA, already has a conservation easement along the stream areas and will require stormwater controls for development, impacts to water quality should be minimized.

The primary impact on the general public will be increased traffic. The developer is working with Claremont to annex and rezone property immediately to the east with the intention of having an interconnecting access to N. Oxford St. near the I-40 interchange which would prevent all of the potential traffic to be forced to exclusively use Rock Barn Rd.

Potential impact of new uses on city utilities and streets:

The City has both water and sewer capacity to serve a residential development of this size. The installation of sewer service will require that the developer install a pump station on the south side of the property just north of I-40. City Police, Fire and Sanitation already traverse Rock Barn Rd. on a regular basis to access the Rock Barn Golf Club, and, at some point, the future Rockhaven subdivision, Obviously, the construction of new streets and homes will necessitate more trips in this area, but it is not an area that would force necessarily longer trips outside the City's current service sphere.

Staff Recommendation:

The NR district is part of the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) portion of the Zoning Code. This code, in part, aims to have denser, walkable communities in proximity to services such as shopping, dining, work, etc. Although this area is on the outskirts of the City, it would be located between and less than a mile from two interstate exits, making access by car convenient. Some shopping opportunities exist along N. Oxford St. in Claremont and a road and sidewalk connection would bring those amenities into reasonable walking distance for residents in this neighborhood.

The primary access for this development would be off Rock Barn Rd. The maximum number of dwellings allowed in any future development would be dependent upon the developer providing access to N. Oxford St. These two accesses would divide traffic to and from the development. The developer has already submitted a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) based on a preliminary design that includes this property, property to the north which is being treated as a separate zoning request and the property in Claremont's jurisdiction. NCDOT has provided preliminary design requirements for road improvements to the developer. The developer has included additional property since the TIA was done and may be required to submit an update to NCDOT.

The proposed zoning fits with the LDP Future Landuse Map. The demand for housing is still high and this is one of the few areas that Conover has to expand where the City already has services available. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the rezoning to the Planning Board.