

**Albemarle County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
FINAL Minutes October 25, 2022**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were: Karen Firehock, Chair; Julian Bivins; Fred Missel; Luis Carrazana; and Lonnie Murray

Members absent: Corey Clayborne

Other officials present were: Charles Rapp, Director of Planning; Andy Herrick, County Attorney's Office; Scott Clark; Kevin McCullum; Rebecca Ragsdale; Alberic Karina-Plun and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commission.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Firehock said opportunities for the public to access and participate in the hybrid meeting were posted on the County's website, on Planning Commission's homepage, and on the County Calendar when available. She said participation would include the opportunity to comment on those matters from which comments from the public would be received.

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Ms. Firehock established a quorum.

Other Matters Not Listed on the Agenda from the Public

There were none.

Consent Agenda

No items from the Consent Agenda were commented on nor pulled.

Mr. Bivins moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. Mr. Missel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Public Hearings

SP202200021 Dominion Hollymead Substation Expansion Project

Ms. Ragsdale said that she was the Planning Manager who would present this item. She said that this was a project for the Hollymead substation. She showed the Commission the location map that indicated the site was located off of Worth Crossing, near the Forest Lakes commercial area to the north. She said that surrounding the rest of the property were residential areas of Forest Lakes or the Forest Lakes north clubhouse and lake and trail amenity. She said that it was approximately 6.72 acres in size and had split zoning, but utilities were allowed in any zoning district, and this was given the Urban Density Residential that was expected for utilities in any district.

Ms. Ragsdale showed an aerial view of the existing conditions of the property, displaying the proximity of one of the newer sections of Forest Lakes to the north and east, the lake and trail amenity, and the wooded areas on the property that provided screening to the Forest Lakes area and residents. She indicated that there was an area that had visible impacts as an existing condition. She said that the proposal was to expand toward that lake and amenity area. She said shown on the map was the existing facility and entrance off of Worth Crossing, proposed stormwater management, and a retaining wall that was necessary. She said that it was a 6.72-acre site, the existing facility was about 1.46 acres, and the expansion would give it another 1.66 acres for a total of 2.28 acres.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the expansion would add some additional equipment that the technical team would explain to the Commission was necessary for the existing system, and would not expand capacity, but would allow the system to run more efficiently. She said that after the special use permit process, there would be a site development plan that would include the final details about landscaping and stormwater management, but with stormwater management, the County engineers indicated that Virginia and Dominion Power had their own program authority, so they would not go to the County for that review.

Ms. Ragsdale said that staff analyzed the detriment of this project to other properties, with concerns around visibility, screening, and what to expect with sound impacts. She said that at the time they wrote the report, they did not have as much information, and the applicant had provided additional information on what the existing facility sounded like and the expected sound from the expansion, which would have to meet ordinance standards and decibel levels. She said that at the community meeting that was held, attendees said that there had been no noise impacts from the existing facility. She said that people had questions about what it would look like, and the applicant had photograph simulations that were shared at the meeting and would be shared with the Commission. She said that screening and noise were the primary discussions at the community meeting, but there were also nearby neighbors who needed additional information about the electromagnetic fields due to the effect on pacemakers.

Ms. Firehock asked Ms. Ragsdale to repeat her last comment.

Ms. Ragsdale said that she mentioned pacemakers. She said that people were working directly with Dominion Power since they had moved to the area. She said that information came up during the review process. She said that there were specific regulations in the ordinance with regard to Section 5, which they went over in the staff report as being met, so there were no concerns. She said that the final details on the screening and noise would be taken care of prior to site plan approval or prior to the installation of the new equipment. She said that the proposed upgrade would improve electric transmission without creating any new impacts, and staff thought that it would not be worse than the existing visual impacts. She said that staff had mentioned that there was not as much information as they would have liked at the time the report was published, but that information had been acquired, so staff recommended approval. She said that the conditions of approval were related to the sound study and establishment of the major elements such as the location of where the improvements would be and where the existing trees would remain.

Ms. Firehock asked if there were any questions for staff from the Commissioners.

Mr. Murray said that there had been concerns expressed by the public over pesticides being used to maintain the right-of-way. He asked what the answer to that was.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the applicant would have to handle that. She said that they would look into that with a different division at the time of the community meeting and was not something regulated locally.

Mr. Murray said that it was very near a body of water. He asked if the expansion would encroach upon the 100-foot buffer of the lake.

Ms. Ragsdale said that there was not a stream buffer required around the lake.

Ms. Firehock asked if it was a stormwater pond.

Mr. Rapp said that was correct. He said that it was one of many retention ponds.

Mr. Murray said that it was only a retention pond.

Ms. Firehock said that it was a stormwater facility and not a water of the United States.

Mr. Missel asked for the total area in acres of the existing facility.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the applicant had indicated it was 1.46 acres as part of the disturbed area, and an additional 1.6 acres to be added. She said that the applicant also provided the square footage.

Mr. Missel said that the details of the proposal and the staff report mirrored the previous Scottsville Substation and had 1.2 acres and 5.2 acres listed.

Ms. Ragsdale acknowledged Mr. Missel's comment.

Mr. Missel said he assumed that those areas were not exactly the same.

Mr. Carrazana asked if there were any details on the retaining wall that would be required for the expansion. He asked if there were details on the height or expansion. He asked if the entire red line was the wall.

Ms. Ragsdale said that it was not the entire red line, but the corner of the parcel, which she indicated on the slide. She said that the wall would not be very tall, perhaps 6 or 10 feet.

Ms. Firehock asked if there was anything further.

Ms. Ragsdale said the other thing was the level spreader.

Mr. Carrazana asked if there was any additional proposed vegetation for the area beyond the retaining wall.

Ms. Ragsdale said that there was a lot of existing vegetation in the area of the site. She said that during the site planning process, staff would ensure that existing vegetation was adequate, examine tree health, and the applicant would supplement where necessary based on the ordinance standards. She said that would either be with all the landscaping they could in the areas available and potential fencing to screen the equipment.

Ms. Firehock said the Planning Commission was ready to hear from the applicant.

Mr. Joe Leachman greeted the Commission and said that he was joined by Craig Murphy, and they were both members of GI Consultants, supporting Dominion as civil engineers on this project. He said that there were several Dominion team members present today as well who could help answer the Commission's questions. He said that this project would add equipment to the existing substation to improve its reliability. He said that there were essentially large copper coils that would regulate the current and assist in producing reliable power, as well as helping the equipment last longer. He said that they were expanding on a property that Dominion currently owned and that was originally developed as a substation, and they had done one expansion previously.

Mr. Leachman said that the slide shown was a cleaned-up design from the information that was submitted, so what was shown was a zoomed-in area of the light gray, existing pad area, and dark gray, proposed pad area. He said that mentioned before, the existing parcel was 6.72 acres. He said that based on survey information they had, the existing gravel pad area and access coming into the pad was 1.59 acres of the existing gravel area. He said that the proposed expansion area of the gravel was another 0.77 acres, making the entire pad area 2.35 acres of gravel area, as seen on the plat. He said that the design and grading had all been done to ensure it was stable and maintainable, and that all the hill slopes on the outer edges of the pad were three-to-one, so they were mowable. He said that the expansion allowed for the opposing retaining wall to extend to the retaining wall on the south side of the existing pad, preventing encroachment onto the neighboring parcel while maintaining a ten-foot setback off the parcel with the wall. He said that based on the design, the project resulted in no changes to access, there were no increases in traffic on the site based on normal operation, no new utility needs such as water or sewer, no floodplain impacts, and no impacts to wildlife. He said that the impact study was completed and there was no threat to endangered species as a result of this expansion.

Mr. Leachman continued that the southern area of the site showed the existing stormwater detention system, and with the existing pad, there was a subsurface detention system with a storm drain, so they were proposing to modify this system and extend it along the southern side of the pad to capture runoff, which would be discharged through the existing outfall that was there presently and along the existing drainage easement, so there would be no increase in flow and was at or below existing conditions as they improved the stormwater runoff from that point. He said that runoff to the east would be captured by level spreaders and spread at or below existing levels, so there would be no impact to the neighbor or the pond as a part of that plan.

Mr. Leachman said that the slide shown was similar to the one in the package submitted. He said that they highlighted the tree canopy coverage of the site. He said that the existing parcel had 3.44 acres of existing tree canopy cover, and the proposed tree canopy cover after expansion was 2.92 acres, so they were removing approximately .5 acre of trees on the site, highlighted in the yellow on the slide. He said that they tried to maintain a buffer between the property line and the expansion, and the area near the retaining wall would be within that area that they had to

clear to the property line. He said that they would work with the County to supplement that with plans to add screening along that area.

Mr. Leachman said that there were existing trees off of Dominion's property as well, and the depth of those to their project was a minimum of about 20 feet, and the height of the retaining wall was about seven feet maximum, similar to the existing retaining wall along the southern limit of the project. He said that as mentioned by Ms. Ragsdale, some simulations had been completed. He said that those showed some of the areas where the views were taken from. He said the slide showed the first, with the top of the slide showing the conditions, and the bottom picture showed a simulation of what the reactors would look like, with an additional structure within the fencing and the fencing was a little closer in view there under the proposed.

Mr. Leachman said that the second simulation showed a different view from across the lake, and there was not much difference between the existing and the proposed structures. He said that the trees blocked the view from that side. He said that the image showed what the substation looked like through the trees, with the gray color being the existing structure and the green color for the expansion. He said as they had discussed already, they were working to minimize environmental impacts. He said that they would comply with state standards on erosion control and stormwater. He said that it was mentioned that that was run through Dominion as a third-party reviewer, an existing sound study had already been completed, and another study would be done after the system was online, but currently, all sound levels were within the ordinance limits and were what was anticipated for the proposed project. He said that the wildlife and bat survey had been mentioned, and there were no impacts indicated there. He said that landscaping was something they had worked on, and Dominion had to provide concepts for landscaping, which they would continue to do with input from the County and through the site approval process.

Mr. Leachman said that the project was approved by PJM in early 2022 and the process with the County had commenced that summer, anticipating that through the 2022 meetings they would be approved for permits for construction to begin in the spring of 2023, and completion of construction scheduled for fall of 2023.

Ms. Firehock asked if there were questions for the applicant.

Mr. Murray asked if they knew if they would be maintaining the rights-of-way with mowing or spraying.

Mr. Leachman asked if Mr. James Young from the environmental team could answer.

Mr. Young introduced himself as James Young with the Dominion environmental. He said that typically, in the existing utility corridors there would generally be mowing, but if they were to do spraying, it was generally EPA-approved for spot-spraying rather than broadcast spraying, with rotation of levels of spraying to reduce the likelihood of targeted species becoming reactive to the spray. He said that they had also agreed, within and around adjacent aquatic resources, to use specific sprays in regard to comments from the SEC associated with DEQ. He said that typically, they would mow before spraying, and spraying would be reduced to a minimum. He asked if that was helpful.

Mr. Murray said yes.

Mr. Bivins asked if the applicant could provide information about the noise generated by an electric transmission air core series reactor.

Mr. Craig Murphy greeted the Board. He said that they had the manufacturers of the air core reactors give them plots for sound generation. He said that the sound would vary with the amount of current passing through the device, so they got sound generation values associated with the average loading on the device, day-to-day current peak, or the maximum amount of current they projected the device to see in the next five years, and maximum permissible, or the device's maximum permissible current capability.

Mr. Murphy said that the plot seen above was associated with the average current, so the green line indicated 10 dB at that distance, and 20 dB in red, which was directly around the substation. He said that the distance where people would be located would render the facility effectively silent. He said that the next was the peak seasonal value they saw in the five-year projected calendar, which showed the green color as 35 dB, and to compare, ambient noise was in the 40 dB range. He said that this would be a less-than-ambient experience. He showed a graphic that he said was the maximum that the device could see before it would have to be forced out of service to protect it. He said that 50 dB would still be within the property lines in that scenario.

Ms. Firehock said she would like to see the aerial image again to see the areas to the west. She said that there were residences.

Mr. Murphy said that it should be noted that the study done initially when they were looking at these found that the noise associated with the substation would be below ambient noises for most of the sites analyzed, and the noise modeling had indicated levels at the residences located to the north of the location were within 1 dB of ambient noise measure.

Ms. Firehock said that was helpful. She asked if there were any other questions for the applicant. Hearing none, she asked if there were any members of the public who wished to speak on this matter. Hearing none, she asked if there were any online members of the public.

Ms. Shaffer said there were not.

Ms. Firehock said that she would end the public hearing portion and bring the matter before the Commission for discussion. She asked if there were any points anyone wanted to make. She said that it was a straightforward application with good materials that were well organized. She asked if there was a motion. She said the Commissioner whose district this was in was not present this evening.

Mr. Carrazana moved to recommend approval of SP202200021 Dominion Hollymead Substation Expansion Project with the conditions as recommended in the staff report. Mr. Missel seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (5-0).

Adjournment

At 8:15 p.m., the Commission adjourned to November 22, 2022, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m. via electronic meeting.



Charles Rapp, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date: 11/22/2022
Initials: CSS