

ATTACHMENT B – STAFF ANALYSIS

SDP201800024 Improvements to Crozet Water System Facility

Special Exception to Grade Within a Buffer Area

Background: The RWSA is proposing to connect the Crozet Water Treatment Plant to a sewer line on an adjacent parcel to the treatment plant site. The treatment plant site is zoned LI and the adjacent parcel is zoned residential. The Industrial Zoning District requires an undisturbed buffer adjacent to a residential district. The installation of the underground sewer line will take place on a 20 foot wide area through the buffer.

Staff Analysis: County Code § 18-26.5(c) provides for minimum yard requirement in industrial districts, and the allowance of a waiver of this section as follows:

c. Buffer zone adjacent to district other than commercial or industrial district. ... No construction activity, including grading or clearing vegetation (collectively, “disturbance”), shall occur within thirty (30) feet of any district other than a commercial or industrial district except in the following circumstances:

(i) adequate landscape screening does not currently exist and disturbance is necessary to install screening that meets or exceeds the screening requirements in section 32.7.9;

Staff comment: There is limited existing screening vegetation in the impacted portion of the buffer area, mostly consisting of undergrowth and one evergreen tree. The existing tree will remain and will be protected, and the impacted area will be augmented with a double staggered row of native species evergreen trees (approximately 8) planted 15 feet on center.

(ii) an arborist or landscape architect certifies that trees in the buffer are dying, diseased or will constitute a fall hazard and must be removed;

Staff comment: Not applicable to the proposal.

(iii) the county engineer determines that disturbance is necessary in order to address an existing drainage problem; or

Staff comment: Not applicable to this proposal

(iv) disturbance will result in improved screening through the use of a berm, a retaining wall or similar physical modification or improvement.

Staff analysis: There is limited existing screening vegetation in the existing buffer area. The existing tree will remain and the impacted area will be augmented with a double row of native species trees.

When disturbance is allowed under subsection (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv), the developer shall submit an illustration showing the existing screening without disturbance and the screening that would be installed after the disturbance, and disturbance shall be allowed only if the screening installed after the disturbance is equal to or exceeds the screening existing prior to disturbance.

Staff comment: This information has been provided and this condition will be met. A minor site plan amendment has been submitted showing the installation of additional screening trees in the impacted portion of the buffer.

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County Code § 18-26.5(d) provides that the “the board of supervisors may authorize a disturbance in the buffer required to be maintained under subsection (c) by special exception. The board shall consider whether disturbance is necessary or would result in an improved site design, provided that: (i) minimum screening requirements are met; and (ii) existing landscaping in excess of minimum requirements is substantially restored.

Staff Comment: Staff opinion is that the disturbance is necessary to provide a sewer connection to the treatment plant, which is part of a planned treatment plant expansion needed to continue to provide potable water to the Crozet Community. Site design will be improved because the existing buffer will be improved from its existing condition by the installation of additional screening trees (conditions i and ii will be met).

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of this Special Exception to allow disturbance in the undisturbed buffer including the replanting of the impacted portion of the buffer with native species evergreen trees planted 15 feet on-center in a double staggered row within a 20 feet width, with trees allowed to be kept 10 feet from the new pipeline and appurtenances for access and maintenance.