



MCPB
Item # 11A and 11 B
July 9, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mark Pfefferle, Acting Chief, Environmental Planning Division *MP*

FROM: Mary Jo Kishter, Senior Planner, Environmental Planning Division

DATE: June 25, 2009

SUBJECT: Staff Recommendations for Planning Board approvals of:

- A. Amendment to Final Forest Conservation Plan for Washington Gas Rock Creek Gate Station, S-2596**
- B. Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan for Park Facility Plan for Rock Creek Maintenance Yard, PP2009001**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommendations are made below for two Planning Board actions on the following plans:

A. Amendment to Final Forest Conservation Plan S-2596

Approval of the Amended Final Forest Conservation Plan S-2596 with the following condition:

1. Mitigation for the proposed 0.7-acre forest clearing of the previously protected forest will be provided with either forest planting at a 2:1 replacement ratio or a 4:1 forest preservation ratio. The applicant must secure Environmental Planning staff approval of the selected method and location for satisfying the mitigation requirements prior to or concurrently with the approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan for the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard renovation.

B. Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan PP 2009001

Approval of the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan PP2009001 with the following conditions:

1. Compliance with the conditions of approval of the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan.
2. Staff approval of the offsite location for forest conservation plan S-2596 must be obtained prior to or concurrently with the approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan for the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard renovation.

BACKGROUND

The Washington Gas Rock Creek Gate Station and the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard (RCMY) are existing facilities located on the east side of Beach Drive, approximately 500 feet south of the intersection of Needwood Road and Beach Drive. The review of these plans includes three adjoining parcels of land (Parcels 374, 485, and 610) that are owned by M-NCPPC. The total area of these three parcels is 227.14 acres. The parcels encompass Lake Needwood, existing forest, a perennial stream and environmental buffer. Parcel 485 is currently developed with a portion of Beach Drive and a driveway that provides access to the existing RCMY. The parcel also contains existing forest, a tributary to Upper Rock Creek and associated environmental buffer. Parcel 610 contains a portion of Beach Drive, Lake Needwood and existing buildings and parking area associated with the RCMY. Parcel 374 is currently developed with a driveway, parking lot and a building associated with the RCMY. In addition, this parcel contains a building, driveway, and parking lot associated with the Washington Gas Company Gate Station. A Special Exception (S-2596) was granted on June 25, 2004 for this use. A final forest conservation plan associated with the special exception was approved on March 2, 2005.

The entire property lies within the Upper Rock Creek watershed (Use IV), but is not within the Special Protection Area. A tributary stream flows in a southerly direction along the eastern property boundary of Parcels 374 and 485 before crossing under Beach Drive and heading west to Lake Needwood. In addition to this stream, there are several tributary streams on Parcel 610 that flow into Lake Needwood.

The Final Forest Conservation Plan for the Washington Gas Rock Creek Station was approved as part of special exception S-2596. This plan included parcel 374 in its entirety. It also included a portion of parcel 485, which allowed for improvements to the driveway accessing the parcels. The proposed amendment to the Final Forest Conservation Plan will adjust the area of the FFCP to include only parcel 374, and permit clearing of forest that was designated to be preserved to allow for construction activities associated with the renovation of the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard.

The proposed Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan for the RCMY includes parcels 485 and 610 in their entirety. The purpose of the proposed project is to expand the existing

RCMY facilities with a new administration building, a shop, equipment and material storage buildings, and a vehicle maintenance building along with additional parking areas and stormwater management facilities.

DISCUSSION

There are two items for Planning Board approval for the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard Upgrade project: 1) the amendment to Final Forest Conservation Plan S-2596 and 2) the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan PP2009-001.

Final Forest Conservation Plan S-2596 Amendment

FFCP S-2596 was approved on March 2, 2005. On March 24, 2009, a Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation was approved for the area that is proposed to be disturbed for the renovations to the RCMY, plus an additional 100 feet surrounding that perimeter. A generalized description of the existing conditions was conducted for the remaining area in the three parcels. The upgrades associated with the RCMY project propose disturbance on each of the three parcels, including 0.70 acres of forest clearing that was designated to be preserved on the approved FFCP S-2596. In order for the proposed RCMY upgrades to occur, FFCP S-2596 must be amended. The proposed amendment includes a revision to the net tract area to include parcel 374 only and approval of 0.70 acres of forest clearing in an area that had been designated as forest preservation on the approved FFCP. The tract area for this forest conservation plan includes the entire parcel that the special exception is situated and the off site areas that needed improvements for the construction of the special exception.

Staff supports approval of the amendment to FFCP for S-2596 even though that forest conservation plan showed the retention of 0.70 acres of forest which will now be displaced by the RCMY. The removal of the previously protected forest is necessary to construct the new maintenance yard. The location of the RCMY yard is functionally logical and is intended to provide better public service to Montgomery County residents. The Parks Department will compensate for the removal of the existing forest at either a ratio 2:1 if new forest is planted or 4:1 if existing forest is protected. Because the Parks Department has not identified how the displaced forest will be replaced, staff recommends a condition that this be identified prior to approval of the forest conservation plan for the RCMY.

Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan PP2009001

There is approximately 96 acres of forest on the two parcels included in this project area (Parcels 485 and 610). The project is subject to Chapter 22A of the County Code (Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law). The Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan proposes to clear 0.6 acres and retain 95.4 acres of forest. There is no planting requirement associated with this forest conservation plan.

In addition to the proposed forest clearing, the RCMY upgrade proposes approximately 0.12 acres of encroachment in the environmental buffer. Three areas of environmental

buffer encroachment are proposed: 1) 0.01 acres for a water line, 2) 0.03 acres for a sewer line, and 3) 0.08 acres for the upgrades to an existing stormdrain outfall. These types of encroachments into environmental buffers are consistent with encroachments the Planning Board has approved on other forest conservation plans. Staff recommends approval of the forest conservation plan.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends approval of amendment to forest conservation plan S-2596 and approval of forest conservation plan PP2009001. Approval of both forest conservation plan is necessary to construct the proposed Rock Creek Maintenance Yard.