



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Nancy E. Larson, City Planner

DATE: June 28, 2016

SUBJECT: Shenandoah Drive – Gate at Southerly End

Recommendation

Accept this report to reaffirm past City Council action regarding the gate.

Background

In a letter to Council dated April 3, 2016, Jere and Carol Ericson of Palomino Court, off Shenandoah Drive, requested that the gate which is located at the southern end of Shenandoah Drive be removed. The Ericsons stated that removal of the gate would enable police and fire and rescue to access the homes on the southern end when those residents are in need of help. They also felt that it would make more sense for school bus routes and the U.S. Postal delivery to have the street open at both ends (please see attached letter from Jere and Carol Ericson). Staff also received an email from Chris Brown who resides at 9 Shenandoah Drive, directly across from Palomino Court who would like to see the gate remain (please see attached email)

Discussion

Both the Fire Chief and Police Chief were consulted relative to this request. Emergency calls to Shenandoah Drive and Palomino Court have been limited over the past five years. Both Chiefs are generally supportive of not having such gates but as the Fire Chief noted this specific gate is easily removed and has not significantly impeded response since its installation (please see attached emails from Chief Andrus and Chief Osgood).

The evolution of this gate has a long history and its placement was re-affirmed by prior City Councils on two separate occasions. The following is a summary of the pertinent history.

July 8, 1987 Planning Board Hearing:

The Planning Board conditionally approves Shenandoah Estates, an 18-lot Subdivision between Currier Road and Hopkinton Road. The proposed road within the subdivision would end in a half hammerhead which was deemed adequate for snow removal, with a crash gate at the end of the proposed road to prevent traffic circulation through to Hopkinton Road.

August 19, 1987 Inter-Office Memo from Jack Davis, Fire Prevention Officer, to Randall Raymond, Planning Director:

- Access to project via Rts. 9 & 202 is inadequate for fire apparatus. Pavement width should be at least that required for the proposed Verres Drive.
- Installation of a gate either of breakaway design or otherwise will impede fire department response by the shortest, most direct and best route to a large portion of this project.
- Turnaround is inadequate. If gates are allowed, a cul-de-sac meeting city specifications should be required.

October 13, 1987 City Council Meeting:

The City Council voted to reconsider communication from the developer's civil engineer Gregory Miller relative to the petition for laying out an emergency access street on Hopkinton Road and refer it back to the Planning Board for a further report as to how to handle access problems to the property.

November 12, 1987 Planning Board Hearing:

The Board received a communication from Gregory Miller relative to Hopkinton Road emergency access layout. The Board unanimously voted to advise the City Council that "If the City Council's concern about the proposed through road, gated for emergency use only, was city maintenance, then the subdivider's offer to establish a homeowners' association to provide maintenance should be accepted.

January 13, 1988 Council Meeting:

City Council voted to approve the layout as an emergency access road with a gate subject to the developer paying the full cost of constructing the road and that the road is constructed in compliance with all City and State requirements for connecting to Hopkinton Road, including any necessary improvements to Hopkinton Road in that vicinity. Road would be gated at its southern end.

June 15, 1988 Planning Board Hearing:

Discussion relative to the proposed road between Hopkinton Road and Currier Road in the original Verres subdivision plan ("Shenandoah Estates"); through access was intended by the Planning Board when preliminary subdivision approval was granted.

December 20, 1989 Planning Board Hearing:

Original 1988 approval lapsed. The layout of the proposed street, which had been approved by the City Council in 1988, included a condition that the road is to be gated at its southern end. This gate, and the inability of the city to assure year-round access to the road, had been a subject of concern by staff. It was felt that snowplowing operations would be difficult and would result in snow blockage of the road during winter months. The location of the subdivision between two State-maintained roads would complicate plowing operations. It was felt that a through street would provide more efficient plowing and would assure that snow blockage would not occur.

The Board voted to table the application to allow staff time to review revised plans, resolution of the issue of the gated road laid out by the City Council and other technical items.

The Planning Board also voted to request that the City Council reconsider the issue of the gate and that the condition of the gate be removed to assure winter access to the subdivision and to Currier Road.

February 12, 1990 Council Meeting:

City Council voted to layout a street between Currier Road and Hopkinton Road. Planning Director Randall Raymond explained that the Public Works Department would be responsible for the plowing as it would be an accepted city street and that with the gate, the City would have to plow from Currier Road to the gate and then from Hopkinton Road to the gate, which was time consuming. He explained that, with the gate, the Fire Department might have access problems if ice and snow were accumulated in front of the gate. Concerns were also expressed regarding the requirements for the improvements to Hopkinton Road if the road were not gated. The developer and neighbors were in favor of a gated road.

The Director of Public Works Michael Bobinsky expressed his concerns with the gated access. Unless there was a break-away device on the gate, it would be difficult to plow and maintain the road.

Fire Chief John Dionne said the Fire Department was opposed to the gate or any impediment to the access for safety reasons. He said there was a distinct advantage to the through road so there would be access from either Hopkinton Road or Currier Road.

It was stated that the original action of January 13, 1988 had run out so the matter is up for a decision again; the Council would need to vote again for or against the gate. Councilor McDonnell stated that just because the application lapsed, it does not mean that everything that was voted and approved should be changed. He said he felt the Council made their decision in 1988 and should not change it. Councilor Larsen said the gated road was a compromise and should be kept at this point.

The Council voted to reaffirm the decision for the gated road with the understanding that the road will be 26 ft. wide as required for a standard city street. Councilor Veroneau said from a safety standpoint, he was in favor of having the road gated. Councilor McDonnell said he voted two years ago for a gate and would vote the same way again.

Letter dated February 4, 1990 from Verres Financial Corp. to City Council expressing their support of a gated road.

February 28, 1990 Planning Board Hearing:

Re-approval of the previously approved 18-lot subdivision with a gate at the southern end of the road.

August 23, 2002 Woodward Ltr to developer Robert Sowa, Verres Financial:

City Planner Douglas Woodward advises developer Robert Sowa that project approval had included an emergency access gate on the southerly end of Shenandoah Drive to prevent turning movements to and from Hopkinton Road on a steep and curving section of that road. Mr. Woodward noted that the gate needs to be installed to prevent what has become a safety hazard as a result of traffic cutting through the incomplete subdivision. The Board had voted to require the installation of the gate to address public safety concerns.