

Correspondence



RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (RCCC) A Forum for Respectful Communication & Community Relations

1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 / Anchorage, AK 99503

David Whitfield, Planning Manager
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Municipality of Anchorage
P.O. Box 195560
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June 23, 2021

RE: S12582/S12624, River Hills Estates Variance for Street Light

The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) submitted comments to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) on January 22, 2021, regarding the River Hills Estates proposed plat, S12582 (enclosed). Points made in our original January letter remain valid. We are herein reiterating those points for your attention as you consider this case, now identified as S12624: "Request for Revision to Conditions of Approval for Preliminary Plat of proposed River Hills Estates Subdivision, Lots 1-6 and Tract A (previously approved Platting Case #S12582)."

The RCCC's Land Use and Transportation Committee held a Zoom meeting on April 8, 2021, with S4 Group, consultants to the River Hills developer, regarding their intent to request a variance to remove the requirement for a street light. This requirement is identified as Condition #7 on the Platting Board's Summary of Action for S12582. Over 20 community members attended the virtual meeting where many expressed support for removing the streetlight.

The street light is proposed for the intersection of Mesa Place and Snow Flake Drive. This location will transition traffic to/from the six-lot River Hills subdivision onto the unpaved, rural roads of Mountain Air Estates #1 (MAE). MAE is also a low-density, low-traffic subdivision.

Our justifications for removing the street light requirement are as follows:

- * Neither Title 21 nor the Design Criteria Manual call for a light where a "rural" road meets another "rural" road, so there is no regulatory need to require a street light at this location.
- * The Mesa/Snow Flake intersection is only a few hundred yards from Rabbit Creek Road. The increased traffic generated by the six River Hills residences will be fewer than 100 trips/day. Currently at this proposed intersection, the MAE traffic alone is less than 100 trips/day.
- * Staff recommendations cite the Hillside District Plan (HDP) Policy 14-O as requiring intersection lighting. Yet the same policy mentions the preservation of our "dark sky character." Goals 2 and 5 also state the need to maintain what residents consider an asset of our area: "dark night skies."
- * From the HDP's page 4-17: "*The neighborhood will have an opportunity through the context sensitive solutions strategy approach to participate at the earliest phase to ensure that the transportation project is in harmony with land use and the environment so as to make the improvement blend in with the surrounding community.*"

The context sensitive solutions strategy was not applied here because the staff recommendations

became public only a few days before the first Platting Board hearing, preventing the RCCC from including timely comments on Condition #7. Note, the RCCC's initial November 15, 2020, comments on S12582 did not address the street light as it was not included on the original plat – it was subsequently added by the MOA Traffic Department.

- * Title 21.08, Subdivision Standards, classifies the Residential R-6 lots in MAE and in River Hills as a Class B Improvement area. No street lighting is required according to Table 21.08-2.
- * MAE residents who will be affected by the light have been canvassed and all are opposed. They are puzzled as to why this condition is imposed for River Hills when it was not required for the much larger, recently platted, Spruce Terraces subdivision, which is just across Little Rabbit Creek, nor for nearby Canyon View Estates.
- * The RCCC is not aware of the requirement for a street light in any other low-traffic subdivision. In fact, we are not aware of any street lights as a condition for any plat in SE Anchorage since adoption of the HDP in 2010. While larger subdivisions may have benefited from street lights, we are not aware where any were required.
- * The River Hills owner indicated that the location of the street light would be at the NW corner of the intersection. While we believe the light is not needed, nor desired, this is also an inappropriate location because it is exactly where downhill traffic skids into the ditch (as happened this past winter). The Design Criteria Manual 5.4G is cognizant of such design issues and should be consulted.

The light is not required, nor is it needed for safety at this location. Furthermore, street lights at Hillside intersections—even along main roads—are neither customary nor desired. For these reasons, the RCCC requests that Condition #7 be deleted from the River Hills plat.

Sincerely,



Ann Rappoport, Co-Chair
Rabbit Creek Community Council



Carl Johnson, Co-Chair
Rabbit Creek Community Council

Enclosure (1)

cc: Kristen Langley, Traffic Safety Section Supervisor, kristen.langley@anchorageak.gov
Randy Ribble, Assistant Traffic Engineer, randon.ribbon@anchorageak.gov
Lori Blake, MOA Planning Dept, Platting, BlakeLA@ci.anchorage.ak.us

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1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 / Anchorage, AK 99503

David Whitfield, Planning Manager
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MOA, Planning Department
PO Box 195560
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January 22, 2020

RE: S-12582, River Hills Estates plat condition for Street Light

The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) recently learned of the Platting Board's condition #7 (via staff's recommendation and the Traffic Department) that calls for "intersection lighting" at Mesa Place & Snow Flake Drive. This location will transition traffic to/from the six-lot River Hills subdivision onto the unpaved, rural roads of Mountain Air Estates #1 (MAE)—which is also a low-density, low-traffic subdivision.

The RCCC discussed this issue at our January Zoom meeting and voted to oppose this condition (19 yays, zero nays, and 6 abstained) for the following reasons:

- * The MAE residents, who will be affected by the light, have been canvassed and all are opposed. They are puzzled as to why this condition is imposed for River Hills when it was not required for the much larger, recently platted, Spruce Terraces subdivision, which is just across Little Rabbit Creek, nor for Canyon View Estates.
- * The RCCC is not aware of the requirement for a street light in any other low-traffic subdivision.
- * The Mesa/Snow Flake intersection, is only a few hundred yards from Rabbit Creek Road. The increased traffic generated by the six River Hills residences will be under 100 trips/day. Currently at this proposed intersection, the MAE traffic alone probably is not 100 trips/day.
- * Staff recommendations cite the Hillside District Plan (HDP) Policy 14-O as requiring intersection lighting. Yet the same policy mentions the preservation of our "dark sky character." Goals 2 and 5 also state the need to maintain what the residents consider is an asset of "dark night skies."
- * From the HDP's page 4-17: "*The neighborhood will have an opportunity through the context sensitive solutions strategy approach to participate at the earliest phase to ensure that the transportation project is in harmony with land use and the environment so as to make the improvement blend in with the surrounding community.*"

The context sensitive solutions strategy was not applied here because the staff recommendations became public only a few days before the hearing and not in time for the RCCC to comment on Condition #7.

- * Title 21.08 Subdivision Standards Classifies the Residential R-6 lots in MAE and in River Hills as a Class B Improvement area. No street lighting is required according to Table 21.08-2.
- * The River Hills landowner indicated that the location of the street light would be at the NW corner of the intersection. While we believe the light is not needed, nor desired, this is an inappropriate location because it is exactly where downhill-traffic skids into the ditch (as happened a few weeks ago). The Design Criteria Manual (DCM) 5.4G is cognizant of such issues and should be consulted.

In summary, the light is not required; neither is it needed for safety at this location. Furthermore, lights at Hillside intersections—even along main roads—are not customary, nor desired. For these reasons, the RCCC requests that Condition #7 be deleted.

If a site visit would help clarify this situation, please contact neighbors: Judith Michael (judym.rccc@gmail.com), or Dianne Holmes (dianne.rccc@gmail.com).



Carl Johnson, Co-Chair



Ann Rappoport, Co-Chair

cc: Kristen Langley, Traffic Safety Section Supervisor, kristen.langley@anchorageak.gov
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