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Memorandum

Date: September 21, 2017
To: Town Council
From: Amanda L. Stearns, Community Development Director
Re: Council Work Plan Item - Resource Conservation Zoning Overlay
District Policy Implementation – Basic information on zoning requirements

In an effort to provide some background information for the density conversation, here are some basic elements of the zoning ordinance that control the division of land and ultimately the density.

Lots created as part of a Planning Board approval – The creation or extension of a new street (access and frontage for new lots) or the creation of a subdivision requires Planning Board approval. There are many exemptions to subdivisions but the basic definition includes two divisions or three lots or units. The method of calculating density is the same for all projects.

Density Calculation - The total number of acres are reduced by the total nondevelopable land as defined by the ordinance, establishing the total “net residential area (NRA)” for a parcel. That acreage is then divided by the density allowance per unit. This results in the total maximum number of units possible on a tract. The developer may choose to reduce the number of units depending on their development goals.

For example a 10 acre tract of land with 5 acres of net residential area would result in the calculation of 5 acres divided by the density allowance.

History of density calculations. The ordinance has always treated single family and attached dwellings (two or multi family dwellings) differently with regard to density in residential districts. This difference was not apparent as other dimensional restrictions (site size and distance between buildings) for multiplex development made that type of development unattractive. One of the key policies that came out of the Comprehensive Plan was to generate regulation that made two-family and multi-family development more attractive.

For example in the RA District the density calculation for two-family and multi-family was 15,000 NRA per unit and is now 5,000 NRA per unit and for single family it was 20,000 NRA per unit and is now 10,000 NRA.

Impact of RCZOD on density. The requirement of a development to meet the RCZOD standards does not impact the maximum possible density of the development. The impact is that the units have to be located in a smaller area, with open space conserved.

For example a project with 10 acres and 5 acres of NRA in the RA District would result in a maximum density of 21 single family units. Open space required would be 6.65 acres (30% of the NRA has to be placed in open space along with acreage equal to the amount of nondevelopable area). The remaining 3.35 acres is where the homes would be placed. The RCZOD allows for reduced lot sizes so that units can be clustered, a key design element of conservation based zoning.