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## Council weighs dueling views on apartments

Opponents of Summerfield landowner David Couch's plans for nearly 1,200 apartments present a starkly different view from what the developer says he plans to build

by CHRIS BURRITT

**SUMMERFIELD** – It's all about apartments, despite what the agenda for next week's Summerfield Town Council meeting says.

The agenda for the Tuesday, April 12, meeting states that the council will consider a request by landowner David Couch to amend the town's development rules. His 16-page text amendment application details his proposal for a new zoning district; if approved, Couch would have to then apply to rezone his property to accommodate 11 villages he hopes to build on 973 acres from Summerfield Road to Interstate 73.

The plan envisions the preservation of green space and rural views and construction of trails connecting the villages with a mix of housing, from moderately priced multifamily dwellings to luxury homes

selling for more than \$2 million.

**But Couch's proposal to build the first apartments in Summerfield has emerged as a deal-breaker and rallying cry for opponents, even among some who say they aren't opposed to moderately priced housing such as townhomes and multiplex dwellings.**

The 1,192 apartments are proposed for four locations – at three corners of the I-73 and N.C. 150 interchange near the Armfield, Henson Forest and Henson Farms

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## Easter traditions, memories

Compiled by ANNETTE JOYCE



*Overflowing with family traditions and magical memories, Easter is a special time of year for many people. Realizing that everyone celebrates the holiday a little differently, we reached out to our readers and asked them to share their Easter traditions – here's what they had to say...*

While many people's memories of Easter are marked by church services, Easter egg hunts and candy, Robin Priddy's memories are a little different.

When Priddy, who lives in Stokesdale, was 6 years old, she was hospitalized with pneumonia, blood poisoning and scarlet fever. She was placed into a drug-induced coma, and her family wasn't given much hope for her survival.

"Family members took turns sitting with me. My Grandma Lovett was with me one night when she said I sat up in bed and

started praying. After that I started improving," Priddy said.

"The only memory I have of that entire time was waking up and seeing a 3-foot stuffed Easter bunny in my room," she added. "My sweet teacher, Mary Lou Preston, had brought it to me while I was in the coma. To this day, I always think of Mrs. Preston when I see stuffed Easter bunnies."

Along with this memory, Priddy shared a tradition that has carried through to her grandchildren.

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Summerfield landowner David Couch said “long vistas” such as the one shown above will be preserved in his proposed plans for The Villages of Summerfield Farms, while apartment buildings such as those shown below will provide needed housing options not currently available in Summerfield.



subdivisions. The fourth location is a tract behind the mobile home park on the southern end of Summerfield Road.

Even though the apartments would occupy less than 7% of the nearly 1,000-acre development, fear of widespread negative ramifications – more traffic congestion and overcrowding of schools, spoiled views, litter, crime and nighttime light pollution – has mobilized opponents.

“Is this our Summerfield?” asks the narrator of a YouTube video recently posted by organizers of the StopSummerfieldApartments.com website. The nearly 10-minute video shows a sunrise blocked by apartments along Battleground Avenue between Summerfield and Greensboro. Aerial views of properties built by Couch’s Blue Ridge Cos. – multistory apartments surrounded by strips of grass and asphalt – stoke fears that he may build conventional apartments in Summerfield.

Couch said the apartments he’s proposing for the Villages of Summerfield Farms defy the stereotype for apartments as “buildings popping out of a parking lot.”

“When you have 973 acres, you can do so much more with the design of apartments,” Couch said in an interview earlier this week.

Apartments would be mixed with other types of housing within the villages. Parking would be confined to the rear of buildings so the front of the apartments would face tree-lined streets with sidewalks, Couch said.

The front of the buildings would be higher than the street, creating a visual break for passers-by and enhancing privacy for residents, according to Couch’s plans. Exterior space would be designed as porches, not conventional balconies.

Such design isn’t allowed by the unified development ordinance adopted by Summerfield’s Town Council last June. As a result, Couch said, he is seeking the creation of the new zoning district – OSM-V, or open space mixed-use – village – to accommodate his plans for higher-density dwellings.

Building apartments creates the best opportunity for creating moderately priced housing in Summerfield, as recommended by the town’s comprehensive plan and required by federal fair housing

laws, Couch said.

He said he’s proposing to build apartments with easy access to I-73 and U.S. 220 to cut down on traffic on two-lane roads bisecting Summerfield.

The developer said he plans to disclose details – such as the number of apartments per building – in development papers he plans to submit with his application to rezone the property.

Whether Couch is able to seek rezoning of his property hinges on whether the council approves his application for a text amendment. In a 3-2 vote late last month, the Planning Board recommended the council approve the amendment.

Opposition to and support for Couch’s proposal are going to clash during next Tuesday’s meeting. A public hearing for residents to air their views will precede the council’s discussion on Couch’s request for a text amendment to the town’s development rules.

Town staff has scheduled the 6:30 p.m. meeting to take place at Laughlin Professional Development Center in anticipation of a big crowd that would possibly overrun the council’s regular meeting place at Summerfield Community Center. The

development center, operated by Guilford County Schools, is located at 7911 Summerfield Road.

It’s possible the council may not vote on Couch’s request during next Tuesday’s meeting, according to Town Manager Scott Whitaker. He and town planner Brad Rentz plan to present a detailed staff report to the council with numerous questions about Couch’s application, raising the possibility that the council may postpone the vote until a later meeting.

Next Tuesday’s meeting is going to focus primarily on the text amendment in expectation of lengthy public comments and council discussion, Whitaker said. As a result, the council has scheduled a special called meeting for 4:30 p.m. Thursday, April 14, to address topics – such as planning for the new town hall – that would normally appear on the regular meeting’s agenda.

### want to participate?

Summerfield Town Council will hold its 6:30 p.m. meeting next Tuesday, April 12, at Laughlin Professional Development Center, 7911 Summerfield Road. The meeting will be livestreamed on the town of Summerfield’s Facebook page.

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