

Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR

From: Mechelle Esparza-Harris <meme1982@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, December 23, 2022 12:52 PM
To: Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR
Subject: Item # UDC 2022-27, Fire Department facility at E. Belt Boulevard.

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Mr. Roakes,

Good day.

Serene Wildlife Sanctuary, LLC., (Serene) is an urban wildlife sanctuary situated between Richmond's Deerbourne District and Hickory Hill School. It was established in 2019 to preserve its wildlife habitat, protect its unique natural area, enhance migratory bird habitats, provide soil & water conservation and maintain its aesthetic, scenic forest. The mission and goals sited were submitted in an application to the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOP) on July 26, 2019. Also in 2019, the land was certified as a wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

My name is **Mechelle Esparza-Harris**. I submitted an email to you on December 16, 2022 and attended the December 19, 2022 Planning Commission meeting regarding item # UDC 2022-27.

As shared in the December 16, 2022 email, a Virginia Forest Stewardship Management plan was finalized on March 17, 2022 considering the sanctuary a streamside management zone (SMZ) due to its location in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, stream located on the tract and its forested size. In addition, the report included the analysis, "*the creek, such as this in an urban area, provides excellent wildlife habitat and will also serve as a great travel corridor for mammals, reptiles, birds and all other sorts of local fauna,*" and "*the tract provides forest coverage, something that is quite lacking in the city as you move south of the James.*" The stream underwent a stream determination by the Department of Environmental Quality in October 2022, received a classification above a creek (rated stream, perennial) with a project ID now established by the US Army Corps of Engineer for recording. The sanctuary is operating under an active Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Plan and its mission, particularly as a sanctuary for migratory birds, is threatened by development so close to its borders.

At the December 19, 2022, I was asked what impact the building of a facility at the proposed site under UDC 2022-27, 3000 East Belt Blvd, and less than 1,000 feet from the habitat, might have on the sanctuary. In response, please see the following;

Given the existence of a **stream** & its mission to sustain and expand on **migratory birds**, the Virginia Water Protection (VWP) for Wetlands & Streams, Clean Water Act, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, Clean Air Act along with any/all Federal Environmental Protections would require full assessment.

"In addition, the Virginia Forest Stewardship Management Plan included, "species of concern known or likely to exist in New Kent County that **may occur on the tract** (**tract being Serene Wildlife Sanctuary**) include," James Spiny mussel, dwarf Wedgemussel, and Atlantic Surgeon (*Federally & State Endangered*), Northern long-eared Bat, Atlantic Pigtoe, and Yellow Lance (*Federally & State Endangered*), Little brown Bat and tri-colored Bat (*State Endangered*), Peregrine Falcon, loggerhead Shrike and migrant loggerhead Shrike (*State Threatened*) and Spotted Turtle and scarlet Kingsnake (*Collection Concern*.)

Based on information revealed at the December 19, 2022 meeting to include water runoff (both from storm and on-going operations) & its potential to affect bottom elevations of a water body along with continuous noise decibels and its significant impact on creating a desirable wildlife habitat, wildlife mating and communication, wildlife territory establishment, among other wildlife barriers identified by soundscape ecologists & articles published by the National Park Service and Wildlife Habitat Council, I am strongly opposed to the development of this facility and plead with the Commission and Fire Department to find an alternative location for this project.

I will be in attendance at the January 23, 2023 meeting should there be any additional questions for me.

Thank you for receiving this information and Happy Holidays to you and your family,

Mechelle