

Pohick Estates Civic Association Comments

RE: **Record CPN-2025-IV-MV-018: Pohick Lorton SSPA**

Introduction

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I represent all the homeowners (260 plus strong) of Pohick Estates.

Developer's proposal: Let me state it as I understand it to make sure we are both on the same sheet of music.

Apartment Complex: Number of units by type in the high rise - 1 and 2 bedrooms - 100 of each (200 units total)

- Number of affordable housing units: 12% or approximately 24
- Number of parking spaces. The developer is proposing a number per unit, either 1.4 or 1.5 and they would be underground

Builder also proposes building 8 multi-story houses on the narrow strip of land between Pohick Estates and Pohick Road.

- One on Lagrange with a driveway exiting onto LaGrange Street,
- Two on Pollen Street exiting onto Pollen Street
- One on Cullum Street exiting onto Cullum Street and
- Four at the Cullum Street entrance with their driveways exiting onto Cullum Drive.

The houses are expected to be 3,000 to 3200 square feet with 2 car garages having price tags of over \$1,000,000 each. Some of them will be built on ¼ Acre lots. Re-zoning will be required from R-1 to R-4. They also indicated the lots will be comparable in size to those in Pohick Estates.

Background

The Pohick Estate houses were built in the late 50s and early 60s and consist of mostly two stories counting the basement and few had garages. They averaged in the 1200 to 1600 square feet range and were built on 1/3 Acre lots.

There is a huge difference in their proposed construction and present day Pohick Estates and if built would change the character of Pohick Estates drastically.

List of PECA concerns

1. **Traffic Congestion** – the addition of several hundred cars exiting and entering the proposed apartment complex onto/from Lagrange during work hour commutes and throughout the day is rather alarming. The difficulties of navigating the hill on Pohick Road near the entrance to Cullum Street to enter and exit the Cullum Street entrance exacerbates the traffic problems on Pohick Road and would increase the traffic jams. The traffic jams on LaGrange Street will

encourage people to cut through on Sylvania Street to the other entrances which cannot handle the additional through traffic. Sylvania Street has only a single lane between the cars parked on both sides to barely permit emergency vehicles to pass through. LaGrange is the only street that can support two lanes of traffic with cars parked on both sides and that is from Pohick Road to the curve at the bottom of the hill, several hundred yards.. All other roads are similar to Sylvania. It's like going through a construction zone when one car stops to wait for the oncoming cars to pass, then proceeds while the other oncoming cars wait, only there's no flag person to control traffic.

Potential remedies

- A. Widen Pohick Road
- B. Addition of traffic light at LaGrange Street and Pohick Road (and maybe others)
- C. Apartment complex exit onto Pohick Road (right turn only) and not onto LaGrange

2. **Overflow Parking.** Overflow parking is ALWAYS an issue with limited parking available to residents in a high density area. This is evidenced by the street parking on Pohick Road east of Pohick Estates and on Alban road immediately north of the intersection of Pohick Road and Alban Road. Everyone agrees it will occur and is almost impossible to prevent. The developer is planning on two levels of underground parking. There should be parking for at least 2 cars per unit or at least 400 cars plus additional for visitors.

Potential remedies

- A. Provide an adequate number of visitor parking spots to mitigate additional cars parking in the neighborhood. This would be an increase to what is being proposed.
- B. (Not a Remedy, just a comment as there isn't any way to control it.) No parking from apartment complex in the neighborhood. This is a NO WIN situation for the residents on LaGrange nearest the high rise.

3. **Safety** – Part of the plan is to build the high rise within walking distance to the VRE station. At present, there is no safe way to get from LaGrange to the VRE station, roughly 1 mile via the roadway. There is no crosswalk at the LaGrange entrance and if there was, there is no sidewalk along Pohick Road to Lorton Station Road.

There will also be an additional strain on existing emergency services capabilities in the neighborhood and surrounding area (fire, ambulance, police, etc.). Of note, there is no ladder truck at the Lorton Fire Station. What will happen if there is a fire in the high rise?

Potential remedies

- A. Addition of a sidewalk on neighborhood side of Pohick Road to the only current pedestrian crossing area at the traffic light at Lorton Station Blvd. This crossing exists but when one crosses from south to north, they are currently dumped into the tree line and have nowhere to go.
- B. Add an additional pedestrian crossing area with a new traffic light at one of the other neighborhood entrances on Pohick Road and build a sidewalk to those locations. If

Pohick Road is widened and the sidewalks are installed, that will affect the property lines for the new houses.

- 4. Utilities** – With the addition of such a significantly ambitious project, it could overwhelm an existing challenged power grid, gas supply lines, water and sewage usage and drainage issues without significant upgrades in all aspects. The Pohick Estates neighborhood experiences occasional power outages now. In the not too distant past, the houses on the lower end of Lagrange experience severe flooding problems.

Potential remedies

- A. Provide significant electrical upgrades in the neighborhood.
- B. Provide significant sewage upgrades to handle the 200 apartments in the high rise building
- C. Significantly upgrade water supply to ensure sufficient water pressure (i.e., no lowering of water pressure in the neighborhood due to usage at the apartment complex)
- D. Add new/additional fire hydrants
- E. Update water drainage to alleviate the issues on Lagrange Street to fix historical waterfall issues on that street.

5. Ecological Impact

The location proposed for the high rise is on the very edge of a wetland area that feeds into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. There are a lot of concerns of its impact on the ecosystems downstream.

Potential remedies

- A. Extensive studies will have to be conducted to assure that NO NEGATIVE IMPACT will occur. Early discussions with county officials indicated this is a very sensitive issue and could be a show stopper for the project.
- B. Do not build the high rise complex.

6. Impact on schools with additional students and school bus traffic.

The builder estimates 28 school aged children spread across the three school levels. This means an increase in automobile and bus traffic. Some parents will drive their children to school. Some students will drive themselves to school. Some parents will drive their children to the nearest bus stop and wait till the bus picks up their children before they leave the area. They will return in the evening to park and wait to pick up their children.

There is the possibility of the addition of potentially 3 more buses provided by FCPS. The increased school bus traffic to bus students to their different schools must be considered for both traffic and safety reasons. Do the surrounding schools have capacity for the additional students? Will the addition of these students from the apartment complex require neighborhood children to move to different schools? Where will the new bus stops be located...at the intersection of LaGrange and the complex drive, or in front of the building? If on LaGrange, it will disrupt the already jammed traffic. If in the complex, the bus's entry onto

LaGrange will again disrupt the flow of traffic. Actually, a bus turning onto LaGrange from the complex will almost span the distance from the driveway from the complex to Pohick Road. There is also the concern for the full life cycle cost for additional buses.

Potential remedies

- A. Conduct a study and develop a plan to ensure ALL students within the community attend the same respective schools appropriate for their grade.
- B. Conduct a traffic study to optimize the locations for the new bus stops and select sites that would minimize the impediment to the traffic flow and potential traffic jams as well as providing a safe area for the children to wait for and board the buses.

7. Potential for increased crime and litter.

The 200 unit high rise could house 600 or more people. The units will be rental units, not condos for purchase, which means a much more transient population. Our community, as reported by the daily police reports, have listed about one incident every 3 – 4 months and they are usually domestic disputes so it is a very quiet and safe neighborhood. Certainly, the increase in number of people could potentially increase the crime rate in our community.

Currently volunteers maintain the cleanliness of the three entrances. Residents and workmen entering and exiting Pohick Estates find it convenient to deposit their trash along the streets near these entrances. With 600 plus more people and an increase in commercial vehicles entering and exiting Pohick Estates to service them, the problems will only increase.

8. Eight New Homes on Pohick Road

There is a gas line crossing Pohick Road to and beyond Cullum Drive near the Cullum Street entrance. Thus, the first buildable property line will be approximately 75 feet from Cullum Street. This will restrict the access of 4 driveways to Cullum Drive. Currently, Cullum Drive is a narrow street and has parking on one side only in order to permit access for emergency vehicles. Turning onto Cullum Drive from a driveway exiting the new homes will be extremely tight.

The developer stated the size of each of the homes would be 3,000 to 3200 square feet with 2 car garages at a price of \$1,000,000 plus. The vast majority of the 260 plus homes in Pohick Estates are only two or two and a half stories counting the below ground basement on 1/3 acre lots and range from 1200 to 1600 square feet with an average value of about \$550,000. Few had any garages. The new homes would be more than double the size and cost of the existing homes which were built in the late '50s and early '60s. The addition of these homes would drastically change the character of our community.

Our community is currently zoned R-3 and the existing land on which they seek to build is zoned R-1. The plans propose that they re-zone an area to R-4. These new homes would not be comparable to those currently in the neighborhood and the re-zoning to R-4 would alter the

character and composition of the neighborhood in detrimental ways. It would be difficult to integrate those houses into the neighborhood given the wide difference between them and the existing homes.

In addition, the property on which they will build is the high ground so all runoff will pour into the Pohick Estates properties below. This will be exacerbated by the deforestation required to build the homes. Considerable terracing and water drainage systems will have to be installed to prevent this.

There is a major concern the building of these million dollar homes next to our community will negatively impact property values.

The potential for widening Pohick Road has been discussed for many decades. The VDOT plans may affect the property lines and affect the building of the new homes.

The building of the 8 houses on the narrow strip of land between Pohick Road and Cullum Drive and the houses at each of the other neighborhood entrances would remove the existing natural sound barrier.

Getting back to traffic for a moment. The houses whose driveways exit onto LaGrange, Pollen and Cullum Streets will have their driveways extremely close to the intersections to Pohick Road. There are no turnout lanes on Pohick Road to permit a slowing of traffic to feed onto Pollen and Cullum Streets. Cullum Street is exceptionally problematic because of the restricted visibility resulting from the close proximity of the hill and trees. I believe this is a recipe for disaster with vehicles turning wide off of Pohick Road and having someone pulling out of their driveway at the same time. Both Pollen and Cullum street entrances have restricted visibility concerns.

Vehicles heading West/North on Pohick Road have no left turn lanes to allow them to turn left onto two streets intersecting Pohick Road from the South side, Waldron and Dolsie Grove, so they back up traffic until they can make their left turns. I have been stopped at the bottom of the hill heading West/North waiting one or more vehicles to turn left and for the tie up to clear.

Potential remedies

- A. Do not build on the gas line
- B. Build homes of comparable size to mirror the character of the community or not build any at all.
- C. Build a sound and safety barrier to replace the existing natural barrier that will be removed.
- D. Design and build terraced yards and a storm water drainage system to reduce runoff that would flood the houses below.
- E. Turnout lane on Pohick Road (heading from Rt 1 toward Rt 95) should be installed beginning at the bottom of the hill near the townhome complex extending to Cullum Street.
- F. Build a left turn lane at each of the two streets, Waldron and Dolsie Grove
- G. Build a left turn lane heading east on Pohick Road at the Cullum Street entrance.

- H. Turnout lanes in both direction on Pohick Road at the Pollen Street entrance. This one is of importance because Bakers Lane is almost directly across Pohick Road from Pollen Street (offset to the left). There exists a situation with both cars attempting to turn left onto Pohick Road crossing traffic. These streets are slightly offset so it's difficult for both vehicles to pull out simultaneously and avoid the other vehicle. So, one must look three ways before crossing and that is difficult to do safely because the vehicles on Pohick road are speeding and the visibility is limited.
- I. Install a traffic light at the Pollen Street entrance.

Additional Request

There are three "Pohick Estates" signs at each of the entrances to the community which were erected on the Meekers' property and have been there for approximately 65 years. The Meekers allowed the signs to be placed at those entrances. We would request that the courtesy of having those signs remain at those entrances. In addition, we would request the new owners of the property take on the responsibility of maintaining and repairing the signs as needed and maintain cleanliness of the three entrances.

There are numerous trees on the Meekers property that are leaning dangerously over our property lines and pose a danger to houses, sheds and fences on Sylvania. The Meekers have refused to take any preventative measures despite numerous attempts to contact them. If the property is purchased these trees MUST be removed for safety reasons.

Conclusion

This is a high level look at the issues with the developer's proposal. The costs for the remediation of the traffic and safety issues will be astronomical. I'm sure VDOT and FCDOT won't agree to the changes necessary to alleviate the congestion and safety issues that will be necessary to satisfy everyone. The widening of Pohick Road has been on the docket for YEARS and is still unfunded. Will it ever become a reality? How does the widening of the road affect the builder's plans?

The developer is proposing 208 residential units in our backyard. There are only 262 residential units in all of Pohick Estates. That is almost doubling the current number. The type and size of the proposed units will drastically change the character of our community which EVERYONE opposes.

I strongly urge the county squash this proposed development now and save the developer tons of time and money, the residents of South County much anguish and the county's time and efforts that could be focused on other important projects.