

February 16, 2011

Old Saybrook Planning Commission
Robert MacIntyre, Chairman Old Saybrook Town Hall
302 Main Street
Old Saybrook, CT 06475

PLANNING
COMMISSION
EXHIBIT 104a

Comments on River Sound Development LLC Application

My name is Walter S. Hirsch and I live at 10 Leada Woods Road here in Old Saybrook. Our home is as close to the Preserve as you can get. Our development was known as Coulter Woods when it was built 25 years ago and is surrounded on three sides by the Preserve. To show that I have here several copies of the Coulter Woods Development plot prepared by Angus MacDonald in August 1984 and approved by the Old Saybrook Planning Commission.

You will notice that Coulter Woods was zoned mostly AAA which calls for a minimum of 60,000 sq. feet or roughly 1.5 acres. However, you will notice that this development of just under 63 acres only has 22 lots of which many are between 2 and 5 acres.

Why is this? Simply because there is so much wetlands and rock. Almost one half of my lot is wetlands and I pay taxes on every square foot of it. This development has no tax free open space except for the circles at the end of each street for which no one has any responsibility and the home owners are stuck with trying to make them look nice.

When our house was built the builder told me that he had to add in a provision for blasting otherwise we would not have a basement for a house built on solid rock which was the case for homes in Coulter Woods. My well is drilled through 200 feet of solid rock and we were fortunate to have the best water around, better than any you can buy in a supermarket and having more development around us worries me that my well could become contaminated..

Now I know something about what was the the Lyon' property now called the Preserve. It is covered with miles of cart paths created years ago by farmers in the area. It is very rugged terrain and lots of wetlands.

I used to take my dog all the way from Ingham Road, Old Saybrook to Ingham Hill Road in Essex. I never hear mention of the power lines that travel all the way from 153 in Westbrook across the northern end of the Preserve from West to East and then turn South parallel to the Valley Railroad tracks and then eventually across Milrock Road West and I-95 into town. There are some people who would never want to live in a house close to high tension power lines.

When Mr. Taylor purchased the land several years ago he logged several acres just north of lots 6, 7, and 8 in Coulter Woods. It really made a mess out of Ingham Hill Road. Fortunately the Town had planned on resurfacing that road several years earlier and that was done after Taylor filed for bankruptcy.

One day two men came to my house and asked if they could enter my property so they could go in to the Preserve. They said that they were from an environmental company in

MA and were hired by Mr. Taylor to map the wetlands in the Preserve. I let them use my property but warned them getting through all that brush and wetlands could be difficult. They said they would be following the creek running through the rear of my property. Later that day returned and I asked them how it went. They said that they followed the creek which was very muddy at times and found that the creek went East then split in two forks, one going North and On going South. I asked then if they had been to Pequot Swamp. They said that they had driven in their four wheel drive vehicle all the way from the end of Ingham Hill Road past the old broken dam by Pequot Swamp and North to Essex.

Actually most of the excitement in our area is the wildlife. As you might expect we have a lot of deer living in our neighborhood. We get along just fine. I can walk my dog up the street with deer grazing along the side of the road and they will still be there when I return. The other day the big excitement was when 6 deer spent some time in our court eating what every they could find some eating branches of shrubs with no leaves on them. We also have foxes, an occasional coyote, and one day we had to chase a muskrat out of our garage. My wife loves the birds and spends the winter trying to feed them all.

I don't know if Coulter Woods was a successful development. It took about five years to build all the homes and putting in the two streets must have been very expensive with all the culverts and fill. Many of the lots are now seeing sink holes form all the fill and there are many drainage problems. We paid what I considered to be a high price for our lot and I would think that any new development today would have to charge considerably more.

The Spring Orchard development South of us was built before Coulter Woods and the north end of Wild Apple court drains into our development. All that water drains into my property and that of my next door neighbor and has cost him a lot of money to keep that water away from his driveway.

The River Sound development opposite Coulter Woods off of Ingham Hill Road could very well end up having water drain into the undeveloped property at a lower elevation south of it on Ingham Hill Road. This could be a problem.

In conclusion I have several concerns that I ask this Commission to consider.

1. I don't know how successful Coulter Woods was but further South on Ingham Hill Road is Barley Hill developed several years ago by some local business men. It went bankrupt after they were able to put a road in but not very successful selling those lots.

They Mr. Taylor came along and purchased the Lyon property and he filed for bankruptcy. They investors Leham Brothers foreclosed and took over they property. They were a multi Billion Dollar Corporation with offices all over the world that advertised that they serviced Large Corporations, Countries, and individuals with significant assets. Wow and now they too have filed for bankruptcy. Now I doubt that the preserve was the reason but the fact that they were over committed in risky real estate investments makes me think that the Preserve is just one of many.

So the history of development along Ingham Hill Road might make you think twice about what this means to our Town. One failure after another.

2. The fact that Ingham Hill Road has already suffered from the Preserve means that this will happen again if this development takes place and I think the developer should be required to repair repave Ingham Hill Road should it be allowed to add more homes.

3. Having land put aside for recreation makes me very suspicious. It could very well be unbuildable land and could very well be unusable for recreation as well. Then who will pay to convert this land for recreational purposes. That probably has already caused disagreement here in our town for another site. Personally I think open space is just an excuse for creating non-taxable land. I believe that all land should be part of house lots and be taxable.

4. When Coulter Woods was built a large pond was included as part of the Bessoni property. There are several other ponds further along the stream as it heads for the Oyster River. Since there are no fire hydrants along Ingham Hill Road these ponds are vital to the our volunteer fire dept should it need water to fight a fire. But as you go North toward the end of Ingham Hill Road there are no ponds and a fire in any homes yet to be built could be a problem for the fire dept. Of course the developer is not responsible just the home owner and his insurance company and the fire dept.

5. This large tract of land is not suitable for development and it should be PRESERVED as undeveloped land. There is little land left for the wild life in our area.

If I were a Lehman Bros investor I would insist that they stop wasting money on trying to develop this property and sell it to our town and take a significant tax write off.

Any way you look at it this Development is going to cost the Town of Old Saybrook and I ask the Planning Commission to make sure that doesn't happen.