

# **Sierra Club Letter to Board of Supervisors – April 4, 2019**

## **Regarding 4104 Woodlark Drive**

It is our understanding that a developer has requested an exception to build a house at 4104 Woodlark Drive, Annandale, VA, Lot 42. The Great Falls Group of the Sierra Club urges you to reject this request for an exception. We are concerned that this exception will set a precedent for future development exceptions in Resource Protection Areas that will undercut environmental protection. Our position is consistent with the recommendations of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Exception Review Committee and the Braddock District Land Use and Environmental Committee.

The lot in question is located in a flood plain and a Resource Protection Area (RPA), which is a special designation, as part of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, to protect environmentally fragile areas near water from being harmed by development. The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance was adopted to protect our local streams and the Chesapeake Bay from pollution due to land use and development. All of Fairfax County's water drains into the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. To protect and improve the quality of these waterways, sensitive areas along streams throughout Fairfax have been designated as Resource Protection Areas (RPA). Significant efforts were devoted to creating the RPA and with each exception that portion of the RPA will be lost, and the resulting adverse effects will be impossible to correct.

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Exception Review Committee (ERC) has held several hearings since 2017, without approving the application, because it did not meet the minimum requirements of the RPA.

In a December 12, 2018 ERC decision, deficiencies and gaps in the application were still found:

- The failure to discuss the impacts of placing 1,900 square yards of fill on the RPA, including the impact of the placing up to 8' of fill over the roots of mature trees within most of the RPA, likely killing them;
- The fact that the encroachment into the RPA left very little RPA buffer intact, adversely impacting the function of the buffer;
- The drainage issues posed by the high-water table (~2' below surface) in the poor-draining and poor foundational stability of Codorous Hatboro soils;
- Failure to consider the cumulative effect if the same fill and development was proposed on the three adjacent properties.

The Braddock District Land Use and Environmental Committee produced a report which reiterated the ERC's findings. As a result of its analysis, the Committee voted unanimously on March 19, 2019 to strongly urge the Board of Supervisors to uphold the decision by the Exception Review Committee and reject the exception request for the project at 4104 Woodlark Drive, Annandale, VA.

Since a thorough analysis has been completed several times for the project at 4104 Woodlark Drive, with results showing that the project would have a great negative environmental impact on the area, the Great Falls Group urges the Board of Supervisors to protect the RPA by rejecting the developer's request for an exception to build a house at 4104 Woodlark Drive, Lot 42.