

Report of the Observer Corps

April 2024

 **Highlights:**

**Staff proposes new development buffers.**

**Major development along Route 9 in Lewes (west of Coastal Highway) raises citizen concerns and objections.**

 **Report:**

Development continues to be the number one issue before the Sussex County Council. Recent events include :

* Draft Perimeter Buffer Regulations had been prepared by staff. The draft ordinance is found on the Sussex Council’s website for the March 19th Council meeting. The proposed regulations would create a 30-foot buffer with an additional 20-foot buffer for “woodlands” (a defined term under the proposal). The Sussex Preservation Coalition (of which LWVSCDE is a member) is considering improvements to the proposal, including incorporating the 2022 Resource Buffer language found in the County Code, increasing the buffer to 50 feet or the height of existing trees. The next step will be the scheduling of public hearings, tentatively scheduled for May 22d.
* Continuing discussions on two projects along Route 9: Cool Springs and North Star.

 Cool Springs involves 637 acres with a proposed 1922 residential units, 411, 9872 square feet of commercial space, creating 32,000 vehicle trips per day. Presently, the State’s PLUS office is opposed to the development because it is proposed in a non-growth area under the comprehensive county map. The development would require a change in the comprehensive map. DELDOT has not, moreover, completed a traffic study. There will be at least two public hearings: first before the Planning & Zoning Commission and second before the County Council. The hearing dates are to be determined.

 NorthStar involves 400 acres with a proposed 852 residential units, 96,000 square feet of commercial space, creating 13,359 vehicle trips per day. NorthStar is zoned AR-1 and C-3 depending on the use. The project will include 94 multi-family affordable housing in its own enclave. A P&Z hearing is tentatively also set May 22d.

 Both projects are opposed by the Sussex Preservation Coalition.

* Recently introduced SB 237 in the General Assembly could impact County consideration of developments by requiring consideration of the impact on the climate. Although the bill only requires “ consideration” of the impacts the LWVDE Advocacy Corps is suggesting the bill “require” the consideration of impacts.

JHY 4.10.24