



MONTGOMERY

TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Environmental Commission
DATE: August 3, 2023
RE: PB-03-23 Harlingen Associates
Block 6001 Lots 33, 34, 34.01, 35, 35.01, 36 (Route 206)

This summer has made us all painfully aware of changing environmental realities. Those dramatic changes vest us -- elected officials, developers, volunteers and community stakeholders -- with responsibility for doing what we can to protect our open spaces, our waterways and our communities. Our review of the Harlingen Villages plan leaves us convinced that we, in partnership with the developer, can do better.

As Montgomery has been developed, the nature of the lots being developed has changed to the more challenging. Open farmland easily converted to single family housing has given way to far more complicated conditions, like those involved in this plan. As a result, the scrutiny of the Environmental Commission, like that of all reviewing bodies, should be focused on the ways in which the developer proposes to meet those challenges.

Here, the property is nestled between Route 206 and Fox Brook. The entire property itself might be considered a buffer between the developed chaos of 206 and the protected stream corridor. The current plans, however, do not meet those challenges.

To the contrary, the current plans propose to construct a sewer main through those wetlands; at least one building is built athwart a designated buffer zone, with a second building infringing upon another; and virtually the entire property is to be clear-cut of trees, including some mature growth. The consequence of each of these steps is an impairment to Fox Brook. Surely we can do better.

Among other steps, we would propose the following:

1. Re-orientation or elimination of the two infringing buildings
2. Re-review of the siting plans generally to preserve the most mature trees
3. Relocation of the sewer main along public roadways, perhaps to service the greater Harlingen area, but away from the Fox Brook watershed

We don't pretend to have the definitive answers, but we know enough today to ask the tough questions. Under that questioning, the current plans simply do not answer Montgomery's wants and needs in 2023.