SE 22002/AC23008 Testimony for 6-3-24 Hearing

May 9, 2024

Howard and Tanya Aldag
8485 Springfield Road
Glenn Dale, Maryland 20769

RE: Stewart Property (SE-22002/AC-23008) Concept, Functionality, Traffic & Environmental Concerns

Dear Clerk of the County Council:

This is testimony that will be given by Howard Aldag during the Zoning Hearing for the Stewart Property residential development SE-22002/AC-23008 proposed on Springfield Road, Glenn Dale MD 20769. The 12.01-acre Stewart Property site would be developed as a planned retirement community consisting of 57 single-family attached homes. Please make this testimony a part of the record for the hearing.

I moved to Springfield Road in 1986. It was a wonderful country road with acreage, and everything was green and beautiful. The houses were all on 1 to 10 acre lots or more. The Stewart's had a horse that was fenced up to Springfield Road. It was a pleasant rural atmosphere and a nice place to live. Now, there is construction everywhere and approximately 150 houses are being built. Literally there is approximately 50 or more acres of ground being cleared on 3 jobsites, where not a single tree is left standing. Now to add this high-density retirement community on top of the present construction it will totally destroy the beautiful place we moved into 38 years ago.

As a resident of the area, I find that this **SE 22002 Project misleading in concept and functionality**. The parcel size of useable land is not 12.01 acres large. The calculation of land to be used includes the area of land that is under the asphalt on half of Springfield Road in front of the Steward property. There is no plan to remove the asphalt and take back the lane of road to be used as part of the project. Further, if you subtract the land under Springfield Road, the land used to provide landscape buffering, the land under the roads within the project, the land for the retention pond and the setback for the Newstop Branch all of the 57 single family buildings are really being built on approximately 5-6 acers of land, (equivalates to approximately 10 homes per acer) and that is extremely high density development that was never contemplated or consistent with the rural nature of the neighborhood/Springfield Road area.

Each housing unit has a 2-car driveway, and in the published Bowie demographics the average household in Bowie has 2 vehicles. Thus, we are looking at approximately 114 cars that would be added to the overused Springfield Road. Finally, this project has only one entrance for

ingress and egress which is not sufficient in handling the coming and going traffic of this subdivision. Literally, there would be a traffic jam inside the project subdivision every day.

This development is supposed to be a retirement community. Per the Bowie MD demographics the average age of retirement is 65 years of age. This project is for 55+ years of age which means the occupants may have an additional 10 years of working after purchasing a home in this subdivision. That means the traffic in the rush time periods would be similar to other houses in the immediate area and would not have a greatly diminished traffic load as was portrayed by the retirement community developer.

This project was designed to maximize revenue not functionality, and does not take into account it's negative impact on the immediate area.

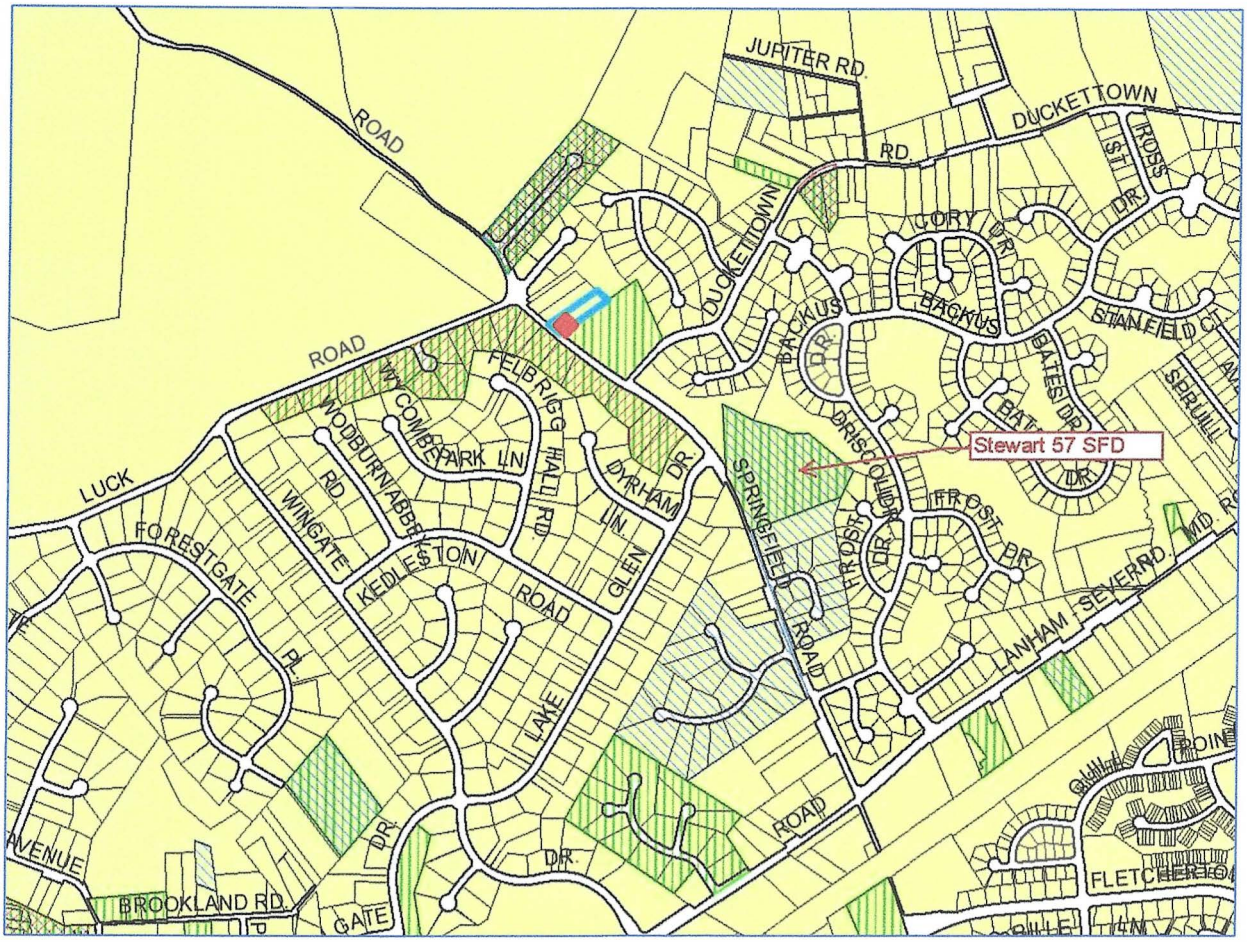
TRAFFIC

The traffic concerns of our neighbors include:

- There is substantial cut-through traffic from the USDA Beltsville Agricultural Research Center,
- The current traffic volume is such that it is difficult to safely turn onto Springfield Road from driveways and intersecting residential streets,
- Area residents experience substantial delay in turning from:
    - Driveways onto Springfield Road, and from
    - Stop-sign controlled intersections such as:
        - Springfield Road-Lanham Severn Road,
        - Springfield Road-Lake Glen Drive, and at
        - Good Luck Road-Springfield Road.
    - And when turning from Springfield Road onto Lanham-Severn Road

I believe that these concerns are valid and could be exacerbated by the traffic from the Stewart Property plus other future development affecting Springfield Road. This added traffic could lead to significant safety concerns and delay for you and your neighbors owning property abutting Springfield Road.

The map on the next page is from PGAtlas and shows that the Stewart Property is one of a number of development projects proposed for the area as indicated by the hatching.



Unfortunately, it appears Stewart Property trip generation falls below the threshold for a full Traffic Impact Study (TIS). There is presently approxitmaly 150 home not including this retirement community that are under construction or proposed on/around Springfield Road, It is likely that other development under construction or proposed for the Springfield Road area may also fall below the TIS threshold. As a result, an assessment of the cumulative impacts of existing and future traffic volume does not appear to exist.

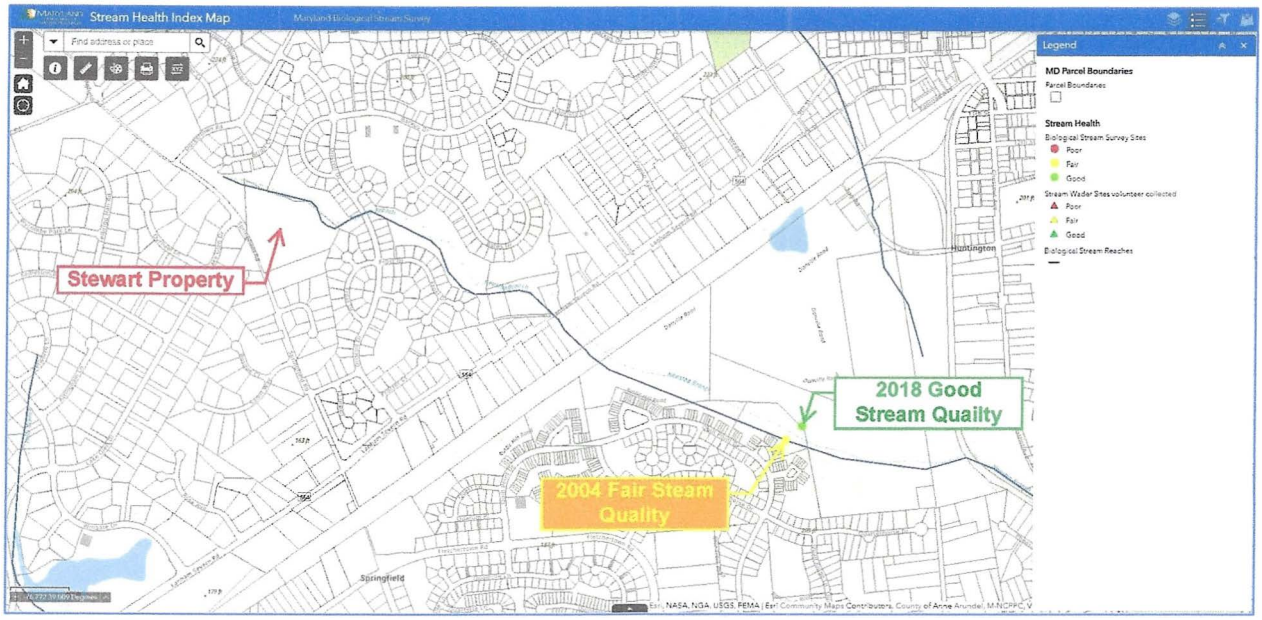
While one might assume that Springfield Road future traffic conditions would be included in regional or countywide analyses, this does not appear to be the case based on my reading of the Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation 2035 and the 2022 Approved Bowie-Mitchellville and Vicinity Master Plan.

However, I am not a traffic engineer and I lack the expertise to assess future traffic impacts.

It is for this reason that I urge you to call upon the Zoning Hearing Examiner to withhold approval of the Stewart Property Special Exception until a cumulative traffic impact study is completed and shows that the safety of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians will not be jeopardized and without causing excessive congestion-delay.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT – NEWSTOP BRANCH

The Stewart Property abuts Newstop Branch. The Maryland Biological Stream Survey (MBSS) Stream Health Index Map below shows that Newstop Branch was of Good quality based on the most recently sampling done in 2018 about a mile downstream of the Stewart Property site.



MBSS rates stream quality on a scale of Poor, Fair and Good.

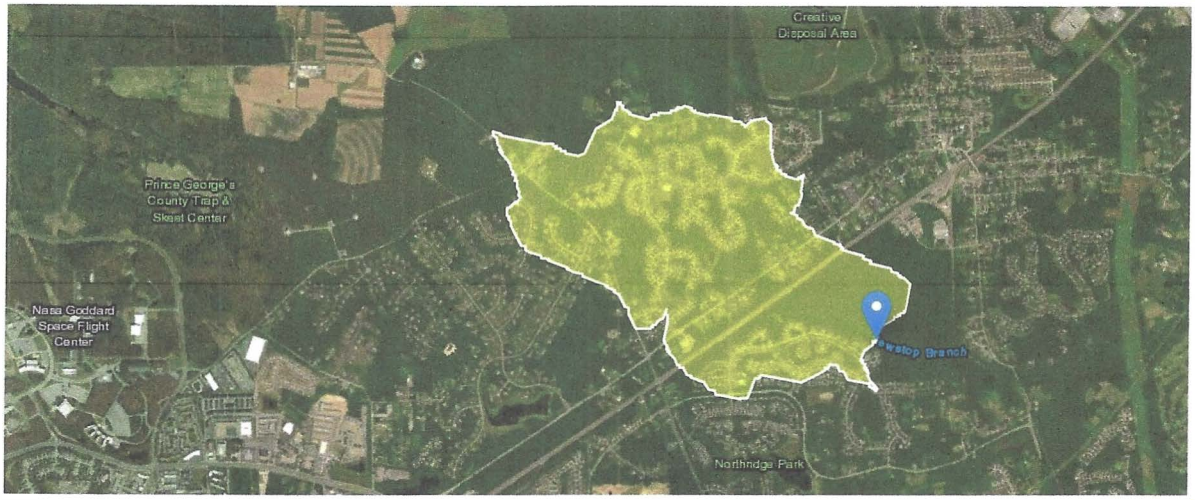
A Good-quality stream, like Newstop Branch, usually supports an abundance of fish and other organisms that are sensitive to pollution. A Fair-quality stream has usually lost most of the pollution-sensitive species making it less enjoyable for children and adults. There are also reasons to believe a Fair or Poor-quality stream may be less safe for human contact such as wading or a child's hand darting into these troubled waters in pursuit of a crayfish, salamander or other aquatic creature.

On the next page of these comments is a data sheet for Newstop Branch which I downloaded from the U.S. Geological Survey StreamStats website. The map in the data sheet shows the entirety of the Stewart Property drains to Newstop Branch. At the 2018 MBSS sampling location a mile below the Stewart Property, Newstop Branch drains a 0.97-square mile (621-acre) watershed that as of 2010-2011 had a 25% forest cover and 14% was covered by buildings, streets and other impervious surfaces.

Generally, maintaining a Good-quality stream requires that a minimum of 40% of the watershed is in forest and impervious surfaces cover no more than 10% of a watershed. Based on the USGS StreamStats data, at 25% forest cover Newstop Branch is considerably below the Good quality threshold and a 14% impervious cover puts the Newstop watershed above the 10% threshold where Good quality usually declines to Fair. In other words, Newstop Branch is on the cusp separating as stream fit for most human uses and one where area residents could become leery of allowing their children to play near these waters.

Newstop Branch StreamStats

Region ID: MD
Workspace ID: MD20231207155221724000
Clicked Point (Latitude, Longitude): 38.99792, -76.78557
Time: 2023-12-07 10:52:48 -0500



Collapse All

Basin Characteristics

Parameter Code	Parameter Description	Value	Unit
DRNAREA	Area that drains to a point on a stream	0.97	square miles
FOREST_MD	Percent forest from Maryland 2010 land-use data	25.3	percent
LC11IMP	Average percentage of impervious area determined from NLCD 2011 impervious dataset	13.6	percent

Application Version: 4.19.1
StreamStats Services Version: 1.2.22
NSS Services Version: 2.3.2

The first paragraph on page 9, of the September 20, 2023, Prince George's County Planning Department Technical Staff Report notes that:

- 3.63 acres of forest on the Stewart Property site will be removed,
- 0.19 acres will be planted with trees, for
- A net loss of 3.44 forest acres in the Newstop Branch watershed.

With 25.3% existing forest in the 621-acre Newstop Branch watershed at the 2018 MBSS sampling point, there were:

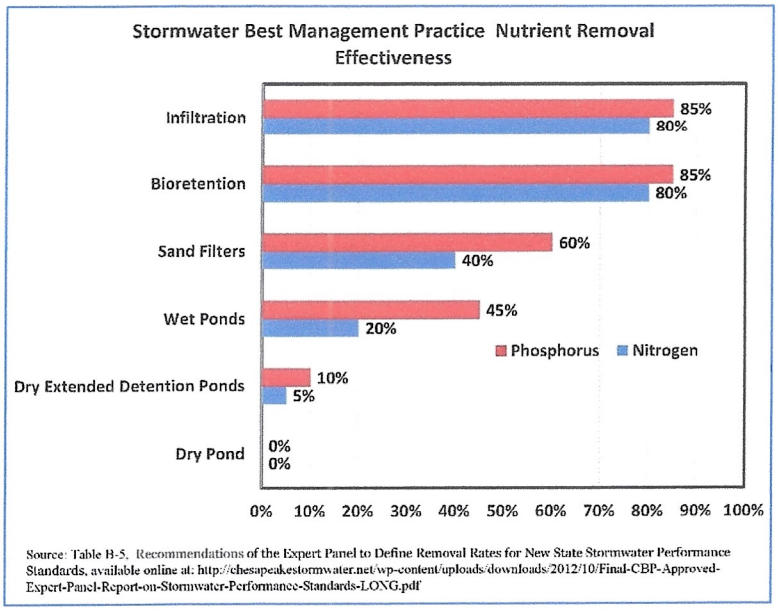
- 157.1 acres of forest,
- Stewart Property development will lower forest acreage by 3.44 acres to 153.7 acres,
- Watershed forest cover will go from the existing 25.3% down to 24.7%.

At an average lot size of 0.21 acres, the 12.01-acre site could be 38% impervious based on Table 2-2a, in the USDA report *Urban Hydrology for Small Watersheds*:

- The Stewart Property would add (38% x 12.01 acres) 4.56-acres of impervious surfaces to the Newstop Branch watershed.
- Newstop Branch Watershed impervious cover acres would increase from the existing 84.5-acres to 89.0 acres,
- The Stewart Property development would raise Newstop Branch watershed impervious cover from 13.6% to 14.3%.

By further reducing Newstop Branch forest cover and increasing watershed impervious area, the Stewart Property, as proposed increases the likelihood of stream quality declining from Good to Fair.

Normally, the use of highly-effective measures to treat stormwater runoff could reduce the impact of increased impervious surfaces. Unfortunately, the soils on the Stewart Property site are mostly unsuited to measures that have a high-pollutant removal efficiency, like the infiltration-bioretention measures shown in the graph to the right, and can maintain the groundwater recharge providing the abundant dry-weather groundwater inflow crucial to Good stream quality.



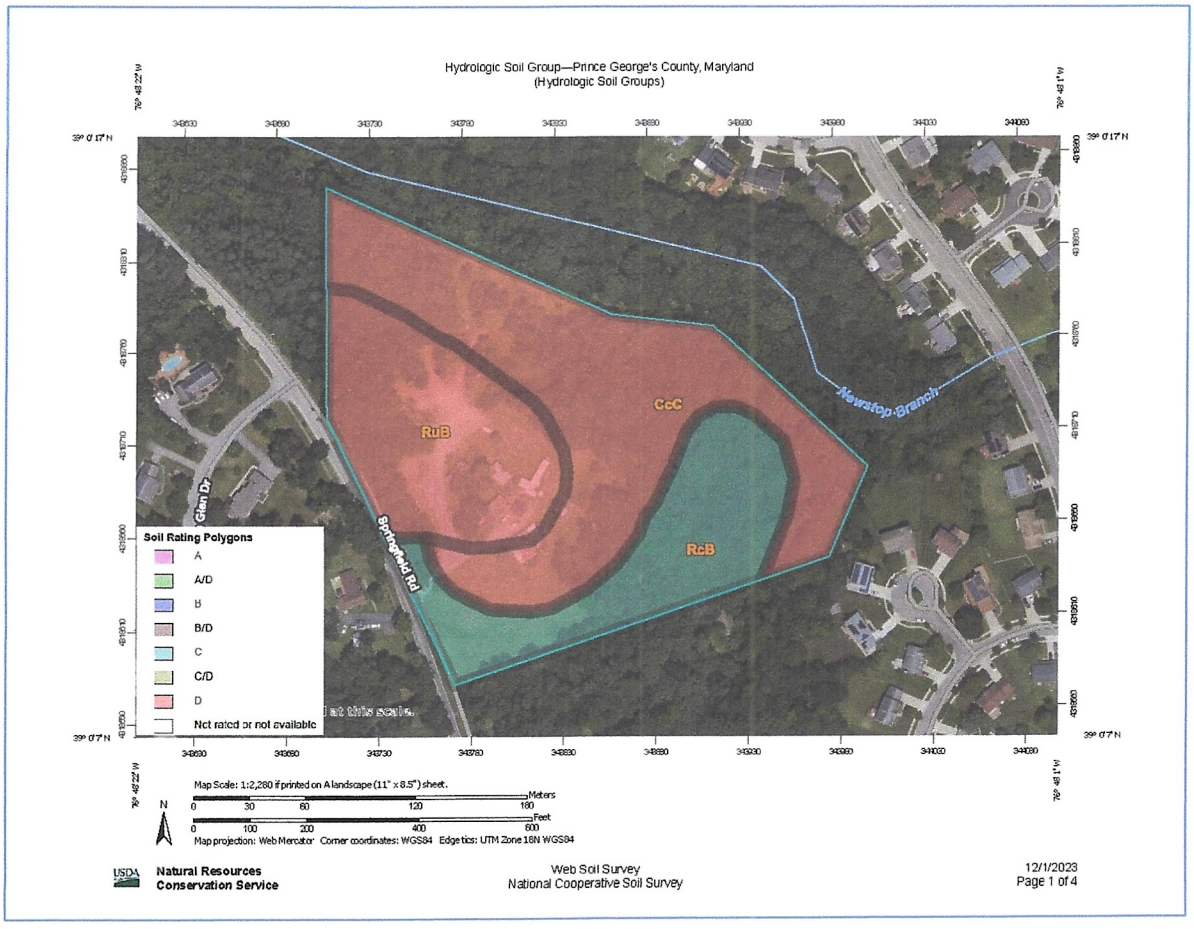
Source: Table B-5, Recommendations of the Expert Panel to Define Removal Rates for New State Stormwater Performance Standards, available online at: http://chesapeakestormwater.net/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/Final-CBP-Approved-Expert-Panel-Report-on-Stormwater-Performance-Standards-LONG.pdf

The following description of proposed stormwater management measures proposed for the Stewart Property appears on page 23, second paragraph, of the September 20, 2023 Technical Staff Report:

> "An unapproved SWM plan (29311-2022-0) was submitted with this application. The unapproved plan shows the use of two submerged gravel wetlands, two micro-bioretention facilities, and a bioswale to meet the stormwater requirements for the site. The revised layout of SE-22002 is not consistent with the layout shown on the unapproved SWM plan. The SWM technical plan shall match the layout of the SE site plan and TCP2, prior to issuance of the first permit."

While these proposed measures can be highly-effective in mitigating impervious stormwater impacts, the soils on the Stewart Property site are not suitable to obtaining the full benefits of these highly-effective measures. Stormwater measures are most effective when located on moderately- to highly-permeable soils. Soil permeability is rated with a system called Hydrologic Soil Groups, which ranges from A to D. The "A" soils are the most permeable and "D" soils are the least. Maximum benefits are obtained when highly-effective stormwater measures are located on "A" and "B" soils and the more permeable "C" soils.

The aerial below is from the USDA Web Soil Survey and shows the soils on the Stewart Property site are mostly "D" with some "C" soils. Because the soils are so impermeable, the



increased impervious surfaces will not prevent Stewart Property development from further degrading Newstop Branch even with stormwater measures that are ***usually*** highly-effective.

Further degradation would be reduced if:

a. The density of proposed housing units was reduced which would also reduce impervious surfaces, and
b. The reduced number of units were clustered on the portions of the site which presently lacks forest and occupy "C" soils.

The following statement appears on page 6, of the Staff Report:

> "The environmental features of the site will be protected through the majority preservation of the primary management area (PMA) and a stormwater management (SWM) system. In addition, both on-site and off-site woodland conservation areas are proposed."

The facts presented in these comments show that one of the most important environmental features of the site – Newstop Branch – will not be protected by just preserving the Primary Management Area and the proposed stormwater management system.

I recommend that the Zoning Hearing Examiner to deny the Special Exception, because conditions requiring that new impervious surfaces be restricted to the portions of the site that lack forest and where runoff from new impervious surfaces are not directed into highly-effective stormwater measures placed within the "C" soils.

I recommend that the Zoning Hearing Examiner deny this Special Exception, because this project is has environmental issues, is too high of a density of housing, and not compatible with surrounding housing units, will increase the traffic on Springfield Road, and is a dysfunctional community layout. This project will diminish the area for every resident.

I want to be clear that Tanya and I do not support this use and special exception. This use is not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and it is not an appropriate land use on Springfield Road. This use is just a way to have almost 3 to 5 times the density of use on this piece of land using a special exception to do it. This is not an acceptable project for the surrounding residents and will change the Springfield Road area forever. This special exception should not be approved.

Best regards,

Howard and Tanya Aldag