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HOUSE BILL NO. 1673

Offered January 10, 2001

Prefiled December 13, 2000

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 15.2-2241, 15.2-2242 and 15.2-2288.1 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 15.2-2286.1, relating to clustering of residential units.

Patrons—Albo and Bolvin

Referred to Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 15.2-2241, 15.2-2242 and 15.2-2288.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted, and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 15.2-2286.1 as follows:

§ 15.2-2241. Mandatory provisions of a subdivision ordinance.

A subdivision ordinance shall include reasonable regulations and provisions that apply to or provide:

1. For plat details which shall meet the standard for plats as adopted under § 42.1-82 of the Virginia Public Records Act (§ 42.1-76 et seq.);

2. For the coordination of streets within and contiguous to the subdivision with other existing or planned streets within the general area as to location, widths, grades and drainage, including, for ordinances and amendments thereto adopted on or after January 1, 1990, for the coordination of such streets with existing or planned streets in existing or future adjacent or contiguous to adjacent subdivisions;

3. For adequate provisions for drainage and flood control and other public purposes, and for light and air, and for identifying soil characteristics;

4. For the extent to which and the manner in which streets shall be graded, graveled or otherwise improved and water and storm and sanitary sewer and other public utilities or other community facilities are to be installed;

5. For the acceptance of dedication for public use of any right-of-way located within any subdivision or section thereof, which has constructed or proposed to be constructed within the subdivision or section thereof, any street, curb, gutter, sidewalk, bicycle trail, drainage or sewerage system, waterline as part of a public system or other improvement dedicated for public use, and maintained by the locality, the Commonwealth, or other public agency, and for the provision of other site-related improvements required by local ordinances for vehicular ingress and egress, including traffic signalization and control, for public access streets, for structures necessary to ensure stability of critical slopes, and for storm water management facilities, financed or to be financed in whole or in part by private funds only if the owner or developer (i) certifies to the governing body that the construction costs have been paid to the person constructing such facilities; (ii) furnishes to the governing body a certified check or cash escrow in the amount of the estimated costs of construction or a personal, corporate or property bond, with surety satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency, in an amount sufficient for and conditioned upon the construction of such facilities, or a contract for the construction of such facilities and the contractor's bond, with like surety, in like amount and so conditioned; or (iii) furnishes to the governing body a bank or savings institution's letter of credit on certain designated funds satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency as to the bank or savings institution, the amount and the form. The amount of such certified check, cash escrow, bond, or letter of credit shall not exceed the total of the estimated cost of construction based on unit prices for new public or private sector construction in the locality and a reasonable allowance for estimated administrative costs, inflation, and potential damage to existing roads or utilities, which shall not exceed twenty-five percent of the estimated construction costs.

If a developer records a final plat which may be a section of a subdivision as shown on an approved preliminary plat and furnishes to the governing body a certified check, cash escrow, bond, or letter of credit in the amount of the estimated cost of construction of the facilities to be dedicated within said section for public use and maintained by the locality, the Commonwealth, or other public agency, the developer shall have the right to record the remaining sections shown on the preliminary plat for a period of five years from the recordation date of the first section, or for such longer period as the local commission or other agent may, at the approval, determine to be reasonable, taking into consideration the size and phasing of the proposed development, subject to the terms and conditions of this subsection and subject to engineering and construction standards and zoning requirements in effect at the time that

each remaining section is recorded. In the event a governing body of a county, wherein the highway system is maintained by the Department of Transportation, has accepted the dedication of a road for public use and such road due to factors other than its quality of construction is not acceptable into the secondary system of state highways, then such governing body may, if so provided by its subdivision ordinance, require the subdivider or developer to furnish the county with a maintenance and indemnifying bond, with surety satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency, in an amount sufficient for and conditioned upon the maintenance of such road until such time as it is accepted into the secondary system of state highways. In lieu of such bond, the governing body or its designated administrative agency may accept a bank or savings institution's letter of credit on certain designated funds satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency as to the bank or savings institution, the amount and the form, or accept payment of a negotiated sum of money sufficient for and conditioned upon the maintenance of such road until such time as it is accepted into the secondary system of state highways and assume the subdivider's or developer's liability for maintenance of such road. "Maintenance of such road" as used in this section, means maintenance of the streets, curb, gutter, drainage facilities, utilities or other street improvements, including the correction of defects or damages and the removal of snow, water or debris, so as to keep such road reasonably open for public usage;

6. For conveyance, in appropriate cases, of common or shared easements to franchised cable television operators furnishing cable television and public service corporations furnishing cable television, gas, telephone and electric service to the proposed subdivision. Such easements, the location of which shall be adequate for use by public service corporations and franchised cable television operators which may be expected to occupy them, may be conveyed by reference on the final plat to a declaration of the terms and conditions of such common easements and recorded in the land records of the county or city;

7. For monuments of specific types to be installed establishing street and property lines;

8. That unless a plat is filed for recordation within six months after final approval thereof or such longer period as may be approved by the governing body, such approval shall be withdrawn and the plat marked void and returned to the approving official; however, in any case where construction of facilities to be dedicated for public use has commenced pursuant to an approved plan or permit with surety approved by the governing body or its designated administrative agency, or where the developer has furnished surety to the governing body or its designated administrative agency by certified check, cash escrow, bond, or letter of credit in the amount of the estimated cost of construction of such facilities, the time for plat recordation shall be extended to one year after final approval or to the time limit specified in the surety agreement approved by the governing body or its designated administrative agency, whichever is greater;

9. For the administration and enforcement of such ordinance, not inconsistent with provisions contained in this chapter, and specifically for the imposition of reasonable fees and charges for the review of plats and plans, and for the inspection of facilities required by any such ordinance to be installed; such fees and charges shall in no instance exceed an amount commensurate with the services rendered taking into consideration the time, skill and administrator's expense involved. All such charges heretofore made are hereby validated;

10. For reasonable provisions permitting a single division of a lot or parcel for the purpose of sale or gift to a member of the immediate family of the property owner in accordance with the provisions of § 15.2-2244;

11. For reasonable provisions allowing the clustering of single-family detached dwellings so as to preserve open space. The density calculation of residential development shall be based on the buildable area of the property rather than on an individual lot basis; and

~~11~~*12.* For the periodic partial and final complete release of any bond, escrow, letter of credit, or other performance guarantee required by the governing body under this section in accordance with the provisions of § 15.2-2245.

§ 15.2-2242. Optional provisions of a subdivision ordinance.

A subdivision ordinance may include:

1. Provisions for variations in or exceptions to the general regulations of the subdivision ordinance in cases of unusual situations or when strict adherence to the general regulations would result in substantial injustice or hardship.

2. A requirement for the furnishing of a preliminary opinion from the applicable health official regarding the suitability of a subdivision for installation of subsurface sewage disposal systems where such method of sewage disposal is to be utilized in the development of a subdivision.

3. A requirement that, in the event streets in a subdivision will not be constructed to meet the standards necessary for inclusion in the secondary system of state highways or for state street maintenance moneys paid to municipalities, the subdivision plat and all approved deeds of subdivision, or similar instruments, must contain a statement advising that the streets in the subdivision do not meet

state standards and will not be maintained by the Department of Transportation or the localities enacting the ordinances. Grantors of any subdivision lots to which such statement applies must include the statement on each deed of conveyance thereof. However, localities in their ordinances may establish minimum standards for construction of streets that will not be built to state standards.

For streets constructed or to be constructed, as provided for in this subsection, a subdivision ordinance may require that the same procedure be followed as that set forth in provision 5 of § 15.2-2241. Further, the subdivision ordinance may provide that the developer's financial commitment shall continue until such time as the local government releases such financial commitment in accordance with provision ~~11~~ *12* of § 15.2-2241.

4. Reasonable provision for the voluntary funding of off-site road improvements and reimbursements of advances by the governing body. If a subdivider or developer makes an advance of payments for or construction of reasonable and necessary road improvements located outside the property limits of the land owned or controlled by him, the need for which is substantially generated and reasonably required by the construction or improvement of his subdivision or development, and such advance is accepted, the governing body may agree to reimburse the subdivider or developer from such funds as the governing body may make available for such purpose from time to time for the cost of such advance together with interest, which shall be excludable from gross income for federal income tax purposes, at a rate equal to the rate of interest on bonds most recently issued by the governing body on the following terms and conditions:

a. The governing body shall determine or confirm that the road improvements were substantially generated and reasonably required by the construction or improvement of the subdivision or development and shall determine or confirm the cost thereof, on the basis of a study or studies conducted by qualified traffic engineers and approved and accepted by the subdivider or developer.

b. The governing body shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, a report accepted and approved by the subdivider or developer, indicating the governmental services required to be furnished to the subdivision or development and an estimate of the annual cost thereof for the period during which the reimbursement is to be made to the subdivider or developer.

c. The governing body may make annual reimbursements to the subdivider or developer from funds made available for such purpose from time to time, including but not limited to real estate taxes assessed and collected against the land and improvements on the property included in the subdivision or development in amounts equal to the amount by which such real estate taxes exceed the annual cost of providing reasonable and necessary governmental services to such subdivision or development.

5. In a county having the urban county executive form of government, in any city located within or adjacent thereto, or any county adjacent thereto or a town located within such county, in any county with a population between 57,000 and 57,450, or in any county with a population between 60,000 and 63,000, and in any city with a population between 140,000 and 160,000, provisions for payment by a subdivider or developer of land of a pro rata share of the cost of reasonable and necessary road improvements, located outside the property limits of the land owned or controlled by him but serving an area having related traffic needs to which his subdivision or development will contribute, to reimburse an initial subdivider or developer who has advanced such costs or constructed such road improvements. Such ordinance may apply to road improvements constructed after July 1, 1988, in a county having the urban county executive form of government; in a city located within or adjacent to a county having the urban county executive form of government, or in a county adjacent to a county having the urban county executive form of government or town located within such county and in any county with a population between 57,000 and 57,450, or in any county with a population between 60,000 and 63,000, such ordinance may only apply to road improvements constructed after the effective date of such ordinance.

Such provisions shall provide for the adoption of a pro rata reimbursement plan which shall include reasonable standards to identify the area having related traffic needs, to determine the total estimated or actual cost of road improvements required to adequately serve the area when fully developed in accordance with the comprehensive plan or as required by proffered conditions, and to determine the proportionate share of such costs to be reimbursed by each subsequent subdivider or developer within the area, with interest (i) at the legal rate or (ii) at an inflation rate prescribed by a generally accepted index of road construction costs, whichever is less.

For any subdivision ordinance adopted pursuant to provision 5 of this section after February 1, 1993, no such payment shall be assessed or imposed upon a subsequent developer or subdivider if (i) prior to the adoption of a pro rata reimbursement plan the subsequent subdivider or developer has proffered conditions pursuant to § 15.2-2303 for offsite road improvements and such proffered conditions have been accepted by the locality, (ii) the locality has assessed or imposed an impact fee on the subsequent development or subdivision pursuant to Article 8 (§ 15.2-2317 et seq.) of Chapter 22, or (iii) the subsequent subdivider or developer has received final site plan, subdivision plan, or plan of development

approval from the locality prior to the adoption of a pro rata reimbursement plan for the area having related traffic needs.

The amount of the costs to be reimbursed by a subsequent developer or subdivider shall be determined before or at the time the site plan or subdivision is approved. The ordinance shall specify that such costs are to be collected at the time of the issuance of a temporary or final certificate of occupancy or functional use and occupancy within the development, whichever shall come first. The ordinance also may provide that the required reimbursement may be paid (i) in lump sum, (ii) by agreement of the parties on installment at a reasonable rate of interest or rate of inflation, whichever is less, for a fixed number of years, or (iii) on such terms as otherwise agreed to by the initial and subsequent subdividers and developers.

Such ordinance provisions may provide that no certificate of occupancy shall be issued to a subsequent developer or subdivider until (i) the initial developer certifies to the locality that the subsequent developer has made the required reimbursement directly to him as provided above or (ii) the subsequent developer has deposited the reimbursement amount with the locality for transfer forthwith to the initial developer.

6. Provisions for establishing and maintaining access to solar energy to encourage the use of solar heating and cooling devices in new subdivisions. The provisions shall be applicable to a new subdivision only when so requested by the subdivider.

7. Provisions, in any town with a population between 14,500 and 15,000, granting authority to the governing body, in its discretion, to use funds escrowed pursuant to provision 5 of § 15.2-2241 for improvements similar to but other than those for which the funds were escrowed, if the governing body (i) obtains the written consent of the owner or developer who submitted the escrowed funds; (ii) finds that the facilities for which funds are escrowed are not immediately required; (iii) releases the owner or developer from liability for the construction or for the future cost of constructing those improvements for which the funds were escrowed; and (iv) accepts liability for future construction of these improvements. If such town fails to locate such owner or developer after making a reasonable attempt to do so, the town may proceed as if such consent had been granted. In addition, the escrowed funds to be used for such other improvement may only come from an escrow that does not exceed a principal amount of $30,000 plus any accrued interest and shall have been escrowed for at least five years.

§ 15.2-2286.1. Zoning ordinances shall provide for clustering of single-family detached dwellings.

Zoning ordinances shall contain reasonable provisions allowing the clustering of single-family detached dwellings so as to preserve open space. The density calculation of residential development shall be based on the buildable area of the property rather than on an individual lot basis. No local ordinance shall require that a special exception, special use, or conditional use permit be obtained for the clustering of single-family detached dwellings on lots that are up to twenty percent smaller than otherwise required by local ordinance.

§ 15.2-2288.1. Localities may not require a special use permit for certain residential uses.

No local ordinance shall require as a condition of approval of a subdivision plat, site plan, or plan of development, or issuance of a building permit, that a special exception, special use, or conditional use permit be obtained for the development and construction of residential dwellings at the use, height and density permitted by right under the local zoning ordinance. Nothing herein shall restrict the use of the special exception, special use, or conditional use permit process on application of a property owner for (i) a cluster or town center ~~as an optional~~ form of residential development ~~at the density permitted by right, or otherwise permitted by local ordinance~~*if the lot sizes are more than twenty percent smaller than otherwise required by local ordinance*; (ii) use in an area designated for steep slope mountain development; (iii) use as a utility facility to serve a residential development; or (iv) nonresidential uses including but not limited to home businesses, home occupations, day care centers, bed and breakfast inns, lodging houses, private boarding schools, and shelters established for the purpose of providing human services to the occupants thereof.

2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on July 1, 2002.