

RHINO TIMES

De-Annexation Could Solve More Than One Problem For Couch

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There may be more to the request by David Couch to have the property for his proposed mixed-use development, Summerfield Farms Village, de-annexed from Summerfield than it seems.

Summerfield, by repeated votes of the Town Council, has demonstrated that it doesn't want Summerfield Farms Village as part of the town.

As a result, Couch has asked that his property de-annexed from Summerfield.

Couch has two major hurdles to get over to get his development off the drawing board and on to his land. One is zoning. Summerfield has made it clear that it isn't going to rezone the land any time soon for the large residential development Couch is proposing. But even if Summerfield did rezone the land, it wouldn't help Couch with the second hurdle, which is water and sewer. Couch needs water and sewer service to build at the densities he is requesting, and Summerfield doesn't provide water and sewer service.

Having the land de-annexed from Summerfield may solve both of those problems.

Greensboro provides water and sewer service only to land that has been annexed into Greensboro, with some notable exceptions like the Greensboro Randolph Megasite.

As long as Couch's property is in Summerfield, it is not eligible to be annexed into Greensboro. But if the land is de-annexed by the North Carolina General Assembly, it could then be annexed by Greensboro and be eligible for Greensboro water and sewer service.

And there is good reason to believe that the NC General Assembly will approve the de-annexation. President Pro Tem of the Senate Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham), when speaking about the de-annexation, was quoted as saying the state needs more housing.

The Republican-led NC General Assembly has been working for over a decade to make the state more business friendly, and as a result North Carolina is one of the fastest growing states in the country. Last year over 100,000 new residents moved to North Carolina. According to a study done by the CATO Institute, North Carolina is going to need 900,000 new homes in the next 10 years.

Because the state is not building new homes at a pace to keep up with demands, the price of homes continues to rise much faster than the rate of inflation, and if that continues it is likely to have a negative effect on North Carolina's growth.

As indicated by Berger's statement, the leadership in the state legislature is well aware of these trends, which gives the legislature an incentive to de-annex Couch's land so that he can move forward with his planned residential development.

De-annexation would make Couch's land eligible to be annexed by Greensboro, which has no problem with zoning for apartments and denser residential development.

Plus, Greensboro is facing its own housing shortage, which is about to become worse because of two huge economic development wins – the Toyota battery plant and Boom Supersonic.

If Greensboro were to annex Couch's land, it would also give Greensboro a foothold north of the lakes and open up that area for future growth.

City Councilmember Zack Matheny said about the proposed de-annexation, “If that were to go through, I’d be happy to consider annexation.”

Matheny noted that the increased tax base would be a big incentive for Greensboro to look favorably at an annexation request.

There is another consideration in the whole de-annexation question. Since Summerfield was incorporated in 1996, the state legislature has amended the requirements for incorporation, and, under the current rules, Summerfield would not be eligible for incorporation. Under the current rules, to be eligible for incorporation towns have to provide at least four of eight services – police protection, fire protection, solid waste collection, street construction, street maintenance, water distribution, street lighting and zoning.

The fact that Summerfield does not provide the services that are now required for a town to be incorporated is certainly a factor that the legislators could consider in a de-annexation request.

The Summerfield Town Council held an emergency meeting to consider how to oppose the de-annexation request. But in a state of over 10 million people, a town of 11,000 doesn’t have a whole lot of clout.