

Nancy Malool  
Township Administrator

Don Huber  
Fire Official

TOWNSHIP OF LONG HILL  
Office of the Fire Official  
915 Valley Road  
Gillette, NJ 07933  
[fireofficial@longhillnj.gov](mailto:fireofficial@longhillnj.gov)  
908-647-8000 ext. 307

To: Debra Coonce, Planning and Zoning Official  
From: Don Huber, Fire Official  
Subject: 621 Valley Road  
Date: January 24, 2021

Ms. Coonce:

The purpose of this communication is to submit the joint fire protection findings and recommendations of Millington Fire Chief Pat White, Stirling Fire Chief Al Gallo and Township Fire Official Don Huber with regard to the proposed construction of 62 attached housing units in Long Hill Township by Elite Properties of Warren, NJ.

The existing site is a large, open, undeveloped woodland area approximately 280' wide by 775' deep situated just east of Mountain Avenue (C.R. 638) at 621 Valley Road (C.R. 512) Block 10801, Lot 3, Gillette, NJ.

Based on a review of the information provided from Thomas Powers of Elite Properties (Drainage & Utility Plan, Sheet 8, Flow Test Results, artist renderings) and site visits to the property, submitted for Planning Board review are the comments which follow:

**1. ACCESS:** There is only one access point (located on Valley Road) to the proposed structure shown on the site plan. This access point and private road leading to the building must be a minimum of 18' wide at all points and shall have no configurations or parking lay-outs that will prevent or otherwise obstruct access to the building by fire apparatus and other emergency response units. An alternate access road (perhaps approaching from Mountain Avenue or on Valley Road just east from the main entrance) for emergency response units is highly recommended.

**2. WATER SUPPLY:** The distance from the Valley Road point of entrance to the proposed building front entrance is approximately 400 linear feet. The nearest existing or proposed fire hydrants identified on the plan are on Valley Road. They appear to be public hydrants. At least one approved private hydrant should be placed directly off the private road leading to the proposed complex no farther than 200' from the front of the building but prior to entering the front courtyard roundabout.

**3. HYDRANT INTEGRITY:** Placement and type of all hydrants to be required must be pre-approved by the Fire Official pursuant to Township Ordinance. All hydrants shall at a minimum be subjected to passing Flow Tests (static pressure, residual pressure, flow in gpm) and shall be installed in such a manner that the center point of the lowest discharge on the hydrants must be at least 18" above ground level or from any ground level obstructions (i.e. curbs, sidewalks, landscaping, etc.) and hydrant bonnets (top) must have a minimum 36" clearance 360 degrees around the hydrant.

**4. BUILDING DIMENSIONS AND DESIGN FEATURES:** The proposed structure is an irregular U-shaped (inverted upside-down J) building designed to accommodate a ground-level parking garage (indoor parking for 77 cars) and three stories above providing 62 housing units (14 one-bedrm, 41 two-bedrm, and 7 three-bedrm dwellings). Total square footage including the parking garage and three stories above (but excluding balconies) is reported as 115,679

SF. The building would be approximately 240' wide X 210' deep and approximately 55' in height from ground level to the top of the peaked roof. A building of this size, nature and design - particularly given the very limited access to the sides and rear of the building itself - will require a comprehensive pre-fire plan to include the potential use of multiple Class A pumping apparatus, rescue units and the use of a 100-foot aerial tower ladder truck. Augmenting such equipment would of course be the presence of an approved automatic sprinkler system throughout the structure.

**5. BALCONY FIRE SAFETY ISSUE:** A recurring concern that has developed in a number of attached multiple housing units is the matter of barbeque grills and open burning devices on balconies.

Pursuant to the International Fire Code 2015 NJ Edition, "Section 308.1.4 Open-flame cooking and outdoor fireplaces : Charcoal burners, other open-flame cooking devices and outdoor fireplaces shall not be operated or stored on combustible balconies or decks or within 5 feet of combustible construction.

Exceptions:

1. One- and two-family dwellings.
2. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by automatic sprinkler systems.
3. LP-gas cooking devices having LP-gas container with a water capacity not greater than 2 ½ pounds [nominal 1 pound (0.454kg) LP-gas capacity]."

Unless this proposed building meets any of the conditions prescribed above, it is recommended that the builders refrain from or the Construction Official otherwise not permit the installation of any gas piping for the purpose of providing fuel supplies to balconies for the use of barbeque grills or other prohibited open flame devices.

**6. COMPLIANCE WITH THE UNIFORM CONSTRUCTION CODE:** All work to be undertaken at this site should be performed in a manner compliant with the Uniform Construction Code and as otherwise stipulated by the Local Construction Official.

**Supplemental:** While the decision of the Planning Board to approve or not approve this application should fall squarely on the merits of this specific proposal, as the Local Fire Official I would be remiss not to share my disappointment with the regulating agencies that reportedly dismissed an earlier proposal by the same applicant to develop a similar housing project on the former site of Thermoplastics at 1261 Valley Road in Stirling. While I understand multiple considerations were ostensibly factored into the final decision, as a result the Township of Long Hill must now consider utilizing this sizable, untouched open-space in the proximity of a wetland and the Passaic River for what some might argue is a necessary housing project built over a parking garage instead of utilizing the Thermoplastics site; a vacant, defunct and deteriorating eye-sore and fire hazard, to significantly accomplish the same objective --- solid, safe and dependable housing built over a parking garage designed to maximize use of the site footprint and minimize any potential high-water conditions.

Thank you for your review of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Huber, Fire Official  
Township of Long Hill

C: Nancy Malool, Township Administrator  
Chief Pat White, Millington Fire Company  
Chief John Whitmore, Stirling Fire Company  
Chief-Emeritus Al Gallo, Stirling Fire Company  
Jeff Heiss, Construction Official