Charlotte Conservation Commission

January 20, 2025

To: Members of the Charlotte Development Review Board and Project Applicants
RE: DRB-25-03-BA Thurgate-Sterling Homes

The Charlotte Conservation Commission (CCC) received notice for DRB-25-03-BA Thurgate-Sterling Homes on January 6, 2025. We have reviewed the application, and we recommend that the applicants place any new structures associated with the new drive in a designated building envelope. We suggest a building envelope closer to Higbee Road to promote clustering near other structures, protect significant natural features on-site, and reduce land fragmentation. Fragmentation reduces ecological function, limits wildlife movement, and reduces the potential of working lands. We would also like to alert the applicants that the 85 Old Higbee Road lot includes a Highest Priority Landscape, as identified by the BioFinder tool from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (see Figure 6). The property also includes blocks within the Charlotte Significant Wildlife Habitat Map (Forest, Aquatic, and Persistent Shrubland Habitats, see Figures 2-4). As we do for all applications, we included a list of the Areas of High Public Value (AHPV) present on the lots as a reference for future planning:

Areas of High Public Value (AHPV)

- Per the TP and LURs, we have identified AHPV:
  - ☑ Primary (prime & statewide) agricultural soils
    - Statewide agricultural soils throughout most of both lots
  - ☑ Surface waters, wetlands and associated setback and buffer areas
    - There is an advisory wetland at the southeast corner of 85 Old Higbee Road and the eastern side of the 131 Higbee Road lot. A Class II wetland runs north-south on nearby lots to the east (see Figure 1).
  - ☑ Wildlife habitat (identified in the 2008 Charlotte Significant Wildlife Habitat Map Project):
    - ☑ Forest Habitat (northern side of 85 Old Higbee Road; see Figure 2)
    - ☑ Persistent Shrubland Habitat (southeastern corner of 85 Old Higbee Road; see Figure 3)
    - ☑ Aquatic Habitat (southeastern corner of 85 Old Higbee Road; see Figure 4)
  - ☑ Source Protection Areas (SPAs),
    - The Ground Water Source Protection area covers the entire 85 Old Higbee Road lot and over half of the 131 Higbee Road lot
  - ☐ Scenic views and vistas (as identified in Charlotte Town Plan), or
    - Not on either lot but nearby Route 7 is a scenic highway
  - ☐ Conserved lands
    - Not on either lot but there are conserved lands adjacent to both lots to the east (see Figure 5)

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

— The Charlotte Conservation Commission

Appendix. Supporting Materials

Figure 1. The Charlotte Map Viewer shows a Class II wetland nearby and an advisory wetland on the eastern sides of the lots.

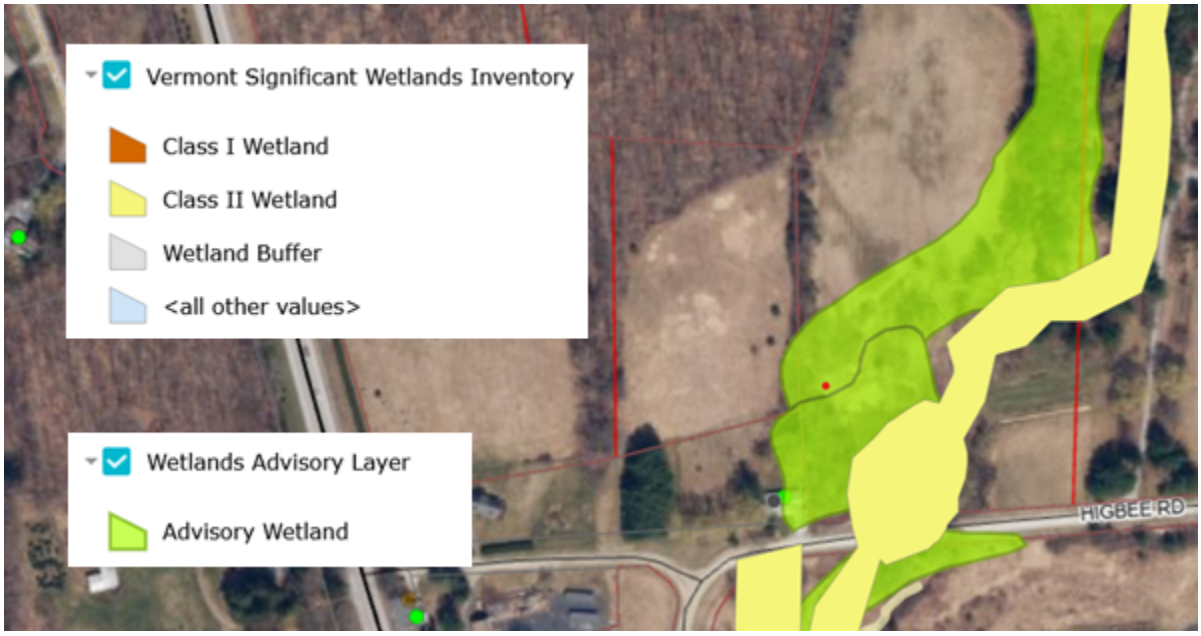

Figure 2. The Charlotte Significant Wildlife Habitat Map shows Forest Habitat on the northern side of 85 Old Higbee Rd.

Figure 3. The Charlotte Significant Wildlife Habitat Map shows Aquatic Habitat on the southeastern corner of 85 Old Higbee Road.

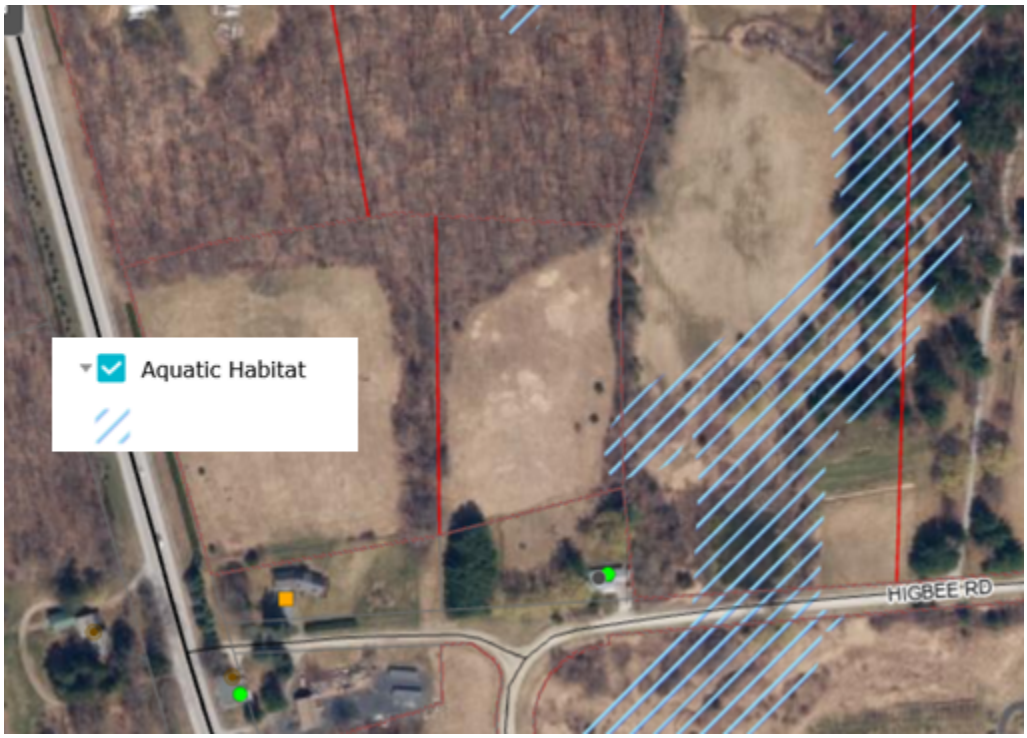

Figure 4. The Charlotte Significant Wildlife Habitat Map shows Persistent Shrubland Habitat on the southeastern corner of 85 Old Higbee Road.

Figure 5. The Charlotte Map Viewer shows conserved lands adjacent to both lots to the east.
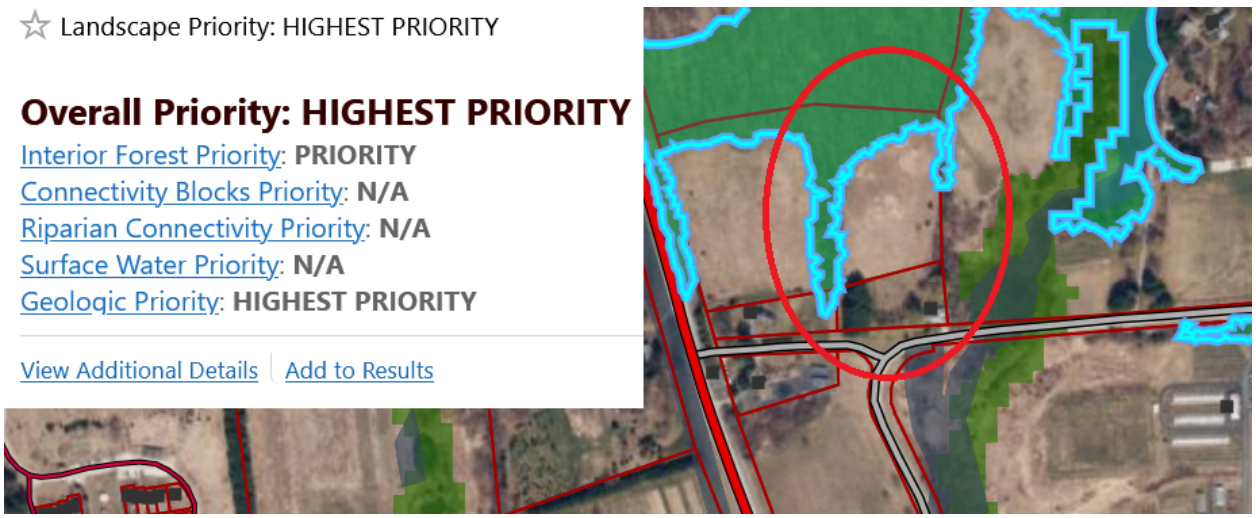
Figure 6. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources BioFinder shows that there is a Highest Priority Landscape at 85 Old Higbee Road (northern part, most of western side, and some of eastern side. There is also Priority Interior Forest and Highest Priority Geologic Features. BioFinder is used to highlight the locations in Vermont of highest ecological importance.