

SmART – Smallwood Aware Residents Team

FACT UPDATE: 1/25/22

Regarding the BESIDE Cabins proposed development

BESIDE Cabins, A Quebec-based media company is proposing both residential and commercial development on 800 environmentally sensitive acres inclusive of Hemp Meadow Brook, on top of the principal aquifer shared with Smallwood. Much of boundaries of this land is directly on the border of Smallwood. The project centers around Greens Hill, the hilltop to the southwest of Mountain Lake behind Hartwood Drive.

The proposal calls for 102 houses and all will be permitted use as short-term rentals (Airbnb). **In addition to 57 single family homes, BESIDE is proposing to build a campground and RV park with 45 “campsites.” But you don’t pitch a tent here. Each campsite hosts what is euphemistically referred to as a “Pod.” To be clear, the “Pods” are actually *250 sq. ft. winterized houses available for year-round use. In effect, the campground will be built as a substantial community.**

Along with a road system, the developer touts “activity buildings” large enough to host a convention or corporate retreat. There will be climbing walls, a music studio, a workshop for woodworking and arts and crafts, a general store, parking lots, maintenance facilities and more. **Some or all of these non-residential buildings will be 35 feet tall.**

As of 1/25/22 the BESIDE proposal includes two parts:

1. Subdivision of land that will contain 57 new single-family houses. Each of these dwellings will have its own septic system and well. To date, 50 of the septic systems will require a waiver from the Town Board because the ground on the building lots does not meet minimum standards for septic systems.
2. The 25+ acre Campground and RV park, will require a Special Use Permit from the Planning Board. **This parcel will host 45 houses described above.**

The BESIDE strategy continues to be one that pretends Smallwood does not exist. Our densely populated hamlet is barely mentioned in the development’s proposal documents, including the traffic study. Additionally, during the developer’s presentation at the 12/6/21 Planning Board meeting, the words “Smallwood,” “lake,” and “population density” were never uttered—neither by the BESIDE representatives, nor the Planning Board.

- The second Sketch Plan submitted proposes a subdivision that is now a conventional subdivision and not a “conservation” subdivision, which would have preserved much more of the environmentally sensitive land on Greens Hill above our lake. This land is in the Town’s Forest Conservation District. Each of the 57 single-family homes will have its own septic system and drilled well. BESIDE envisions second home buyers and/or investors who will use the properties for short-term rentals (Airbnb).
- The over 25-acre campground has EXPANDED since the initial submission to include: 45 “campsites” and an RV park. Each campsite would host a *250 sq. ft house built and equipped for year-round use/rental. The amenities include sleeping, cooking facilities, and a woodstove. Propane heaters were also mentioned by the developer during the 12/6/21 Planning Board meeting. In addition to operating the “Campground and RV Park,” BESIDE will own some of the 57 houses and provide the homeowner/investors of the remaining houses with a rental management service.
- There will be 7 "sanitary blocks" for the campground and “supporting buildings.” Three are "bathroom facilities” which will include toilets and showers. **The project will include a total of 62 total sewage disposal systems.**
- In addition to the "bathroom facilities,” there will be the following common facilities: campground store, campground pavilion, rock climbing wall, maintenance and garage buildings, music studio, workshop for arts, crafts, woodworking. The developer has suggested the campground area can be the site of conventions and there will be 2-3 large group cottages for “Corporate Retreats.”
- This is significant cause for concern for the area’s watershed and Smallwood’s Mountain Lake, as well as the hamlet’s seasonal water supply. Recent testing data indicates that Mountain Lake already has sustainability issues related to stress from population density, old and un-inspected septic systems, short-term rentals, and the Town of Bethel’s sewer plant. As of this date no stormwater prevention plan has been submitted.
- The proposed development is within a special planning district—NYS Major Basin: Upper Delaware River. The land includes Federal Wetlands and contains Hemp Meadow Brook, which is classified as (T), and may support a trout population.
- BESIDE anticipates liquid waste generated per day will be +/-25,000 gallons. Water from wells maximum pump capacity from the principal aquifer shared with Smallwood: +/-20 gallons a minute.
- During the 12/6/21 Planning Board meeting, the developer informed the Planning Board it would be seeking a legally required waiver from the Town Board for 50 of the 57 single-family homes proposed because the lots fail to meet the Town’s standards. The septic systems for the Campground and RV park were not discussed in detail.

- The area proposed for development is populated with a diversity of wildlife, including the Bald Eagle, currently listed as a threatened species. The Wood Turtle and the Eastern Hog-Nosed Snake are both NY state-designated species of special concern and known to inhabit the area. Conservationists consider the wood turtle one of the most endangered freshwater turtles in North America. The loss of streamside forests—and their wetlands and riparian buffers—to development threatens local wildlife populations and water quality.
- The land proposed for development is in or near three wetlands and includes Hemp Meadow Brook and tributaries designated as protected, which may support trout populations.
- There is the potential for destruction of an historic and significant part of the hamlet's view shed, because the development will be clearly visible from Mountain Lake, the beach, and other parts of Smallwood.
- The construction is proposed to be carried out in three phases, beginning in April 2022. Final completion is anticipated in April 2025. In an earlier filing, the developer stated construction would take place over three years, six days a week, thirteen hours per day.
- The main entrance for the development will be at a “full-access driveway” on Pine Grove Road, which runs right through the middle of Smallwood. **Pine Grove Road is the main entrance to Smallwood, which is the most densely populated area of Bethel. Pine Grove Road also provides access to the Gina Estates residential development, the Smallwood Post Office, the Smallwood beach, both entrances to the Forest Reserve at Smallwood and its public dog park and hiking trails, the Swinging Bridge and Top Ridge sections of the Chapin Estates residential development, and the entrance to the public access for the Toronto Reservoir.**
- Despite this, the traffic study from the developer states: “The proposed project is expected to have minimal impact on local traffic operations.” Furthermore, the study, performed in the spring, on June 15th (a weekday), gives little to no consideration to Smallwood's year-round rental market and its population boom during the summer peak season and other variables related to the intensive use of Rte. 17B such as Bethel Woods, White Lake, traffic to and from the Delaware River and Pennsylvania.

PROTECT OUR LAKE AND OUR COMMUNITY

PLEASE ATTEND THE PLANNING BOARD MEETINGS AND STAY ENGAGED

SmART believes the environmentally sensitive land proposed for the BESIDE Cabins development cannot withstand this intensity of disturbance required to build it, and if built, the use of the land will have a significant adverse impact on an important ecosystem and its watershed and the health of our lake. This development, inclusive of the intrusive commercial campground on our doorstep, constitutes a significant threat to Smallwood and the quality of life we currently enjoy. It will permanently change the community character of Smallwood. **This is the wrong project for the wrong part of town.**

- For more information or to join our mailing list, please email: Smartbethel583@gmail.com
- Please follow our Facebook page: SmART - Smallwood Aware Residents Team
- Please visit our website to learn more: **SmARTbethel.org**
- Please consider donating to help pay for our professional consultants and representation
 - Electronic donations can be sent via Venmo @smartbethel.
 - Checks can be made out and mailed to:

SmART Bethel

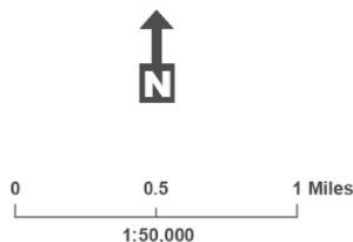
PO Box 301

Smallwood, NY 12778

Beside Development Proposal: Neighborhood Context

Beside Proposed Developments

- Single Family House
- Campsite Development Cabin
- ▭ Beside Development Parcel(s) - Outer Extent
- Existing Address | Structure Points (County 911)
- Primary Access Roads
- ▭ Historic Smallwood Civic Association Boundary
- Streams & Waterbodies
- Wetlands



Prepared by: Geospex, LLC | December 2021

