

## Memorandum

To: Mayor Hemminger and Chapel Hill Town Council  
From: Fred Lampe and Julie McClintock  
Date: June 6, 2021  
Topic: Summary points from meeting with Chuck Edwards, Orange County District Engineer, NCDOT

We attended a virtual meeting with Chuck Edwards and Kumar Neppalli at 11am on June 4<sup>th</sup> and learned the following:

- Mr. Edwards stated that a signal light for Somerset/Estes would need to meet at least two technical “warrants” to garner NCDOT approval. **Mr. Edwards does not expect this intersection to meet even one warrant upon completion of the Aura project.** Whether subsequent development might change this is highly uncertain.
- Mr. Edwards stated that he is unaware of any situation where a signal light was installed that did not meet NCDOT warrants, i.e., **no “political” means of obtaining a traffic light exists.**
- **NCDOT is prepared to permit a full service driveway for Aura on Estes Drive.** We requested consideration of the Transportation Board’s recommendation of a right-in, right-out design. Mr. Edwards said he would not consider that option because it would effectively prevent Aura residents from accessing destinations to the east from Estes Drive. Currently there are no other options for these future residents to drive east on Estes.
- We discussed the option of continuing the stubout road on the northeast corner of Aura through the Rummel property to Somerset Drive (as depicted in the CW Plan). Mr. Edwards said the **NCDOT “supports” and “encourages” such cross access connections where possible**, but is not in a position to require them.
- By increasing traffic counts on Somerset Drive, **this cross access road could increase the probability of eventually meeting warrants for a signal light at the Somerset Drive/Estes Drive intersection.** Continuing Somerset south across Estes would also facilitate Estes Road access for property owners on the south side of Estes Drive as well as increase traffic counts that could justify signaling Somerset/Estes.
- If an Aura access via Somerset exists that would allow egress to Estes for eastbound Aura residents, then NCDOT would consider more seriously a proposal to change the Aura entrance to a right in/right out entrance, judged to be safer by the Town Transportation Board. However, this would depend on a thorough evaluation of the facts and circumstances at the time.

- We asked Kumar Neppalli about making a Council stipulation which would require future performance by Aura and Mr. Rummel to create such a new cross access road, and it sounded like that would be possible. This cross access road could also become the second access to the Rummel property that is required by Town safety standards (with Somerset being the primary access).

In light of this new information, we strongly request that the public hearing for this project be reopened. We are happy to meet to answer questions or further discuss the primary points from these revelations. Thank you for your consideration.

CC: Chuck Edwards, Kumar Neppalli, and Jon Mitchell