

Larry Edwards
Box 6484
Sitka

2 Dec 2025

To: Planning Commission & Planning Director

Subj: Agenda item C – Preliminary plat for a planned unit development at 600 Yaw Drive

Dear commissioners and director;

I compliment the applicant on its reconfiguration of the subdivision so that Street 3 won't form a loop with Herb Didrickson Street. As I testified in April, I believe that this makes sense by enabling gravity flow for the extensions of the sewage system, as well as being best for the Herb Didrickson neighborhood (where my wife and I own a house and live).

Below I ask some questions that the commission may see fit to pursue regarding development of the overall subdivision. I raise them for potential consideration by the commission toward the greater good of the future residents.

1. The interplay of density, transportation modes, and distance from downtown and Post Office

My observation is that few residents of existing Indian River Road subdivisions walk, bike or use the bus. Most drive. For the proposed subdivision as presently planned, many lots are smaller than the normal minimum area and dimensions for an R-2 Multi-family & Mobile Home (MHP) District. Some potential concerns for future residents arise from those facts:

a) For small lots, especially those with developable size reduced by easements on 2 or 3 sides, there may be insufficient area for off-street parking if the family has two or three vehicles, or when many friends are visiting. Nonetheless, p.6 of the Staff Report says, "Staff has added a condition of approval stating that the applicant (i.e. BIHA) shall install 'No Parking' signs along rights-of-way that do not have adequate space for on-street parking as determined by the municipal engineer and chief of police."

It seems to me, however, that the proposed condition may create an untenable situation. If multiple lots along a street may, in practice, do not have sufficient off-street parking, the street width should be sized to allow on-street parking on one side.

b) To encourage walking or biking to the bus stop (at the Indian River Trail parking lot) or to town, it may be worthwhile making the sewer easement between Lot 6 and Lot 7 also serve as a dedicated pathway for pedestrians and bikes, as a shortcut.

2. A fire consideration for the increased housing density

Recent news about the spread of urban fires (and how houses succumb to and add to that spread) raises a potential concern. My observation as a nearby resident is that strong winds often blow up and down the valley, parallel to the rows of lots on Street 1 and Street 3. The question is whether fire in such wind could devastate multiple residences, and if so whether conditions that run with the land specifying disallowed building materials and/or construction methods should be put in place.

Wildland fire is not a factor in this muskegy area. However, photos of fire events in urban areas over the past few years have shown how neighborhoods can be burned to the foundations, yet trees in yards are unburned. We have a local example of fire spread from the 1964 fire in downtown Sitka, where multiple buildings were destroyed. The concern here would be a fire starting in one residence and spreading through part of the neighborhood. If not a concern to the commission for this particular development, it may be worth thinking about this before future higher-density developments are proposed.

Considerations might be the materials for siding, roofs, windows and exterior doors. A particular concern raised by recent events in the Lower 48 is how embers can get into attics through the eve-vents, with air flowing through those vents and out a ridgeline vent – a construction method common in Sitka.

I don't know whether this is a rational concern for this development, but it seems to at least merit some discussion by the commission and treatment in its findings.

3. Water mains

The Staff Report (p.5) says the 12" water main serving Streets 1, 2 and 3 from Yaw Drive and the 8" main on Herb Didrickson Street will form a loop. If this is still the case (now that Herb Didrickson won't connect to the other streets), an easement for connecting the two mains should be shown on the maps. At present that is not shown.

4. Storm drainage beyond the development

A storm drainage pathway or creek is shown, running along the middle of the peninsula of lots between Streets 1 and 3, and along the backs of Lots 23 and 22, and then off of the subdivision's property. The commission should consider the ownership of the land that will receive that discharge, the character of the beyond-subdivision flow pathway (or dispersion), and the maximum anticipated flow. Those factors are not disclosed in the documentation. The Staff Report (p.6) identifies the drainage as "an existing creek." This may be true in part, but it seems from the maps that much of the drainage path will be created, since it goes over a few present highpoints in the topography that apparently will be graded or excavated.

In addition to that easterly and southerly flow, it appears from the description that a minor amount of the flow will go to the ditch along Street 2. It would be good to identify the intended divide separating the westward and eastward flows .

5. Garbage in an area frequented by bears

The packet documentation does not mention garbage. The commission would do well to consider a condition that runs with the land for how bear-secure garbage storage for a week's time will be incorporated within residences, or optionally in sheds, or by provision of bear-proof communal depositories. If the latter, those should be pre-planned and be shown on the plat.

Conclusion

The above are just suggested points the commission could take up in its deliberations on December 3.

Sincerely,



Ariadne Will

From: Renee Trafton <renee@beakrestaurant.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 8:12 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Proposed Development at 600 Yaw Drive, Lot 5B

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing concerning the proposed development at 600 Yaw Drive, Lot 5B. My house, which my husband and I own, is located on Indian River Rd. I am concerned about the location of the proposed construction. The muskeg in that area of 600 Yaw Dr. absorbs a great deal of water. I am concerned that building in that area will not allow water to be retained by the muskeg. That will increase the flow of Indian River, and endanger my house and the other houses that are built next to the river. The river already gets quite high during storms.

Thank you for time,

--

Renée Jakaitis Trafton
Chef and Owner
Beak Restaurant
Sitka, Alaska

<https://www.beakrestaurant.com/>

Ariadne Will

From: math <math.trafton@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 9:53 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: 600 Yaw Drive Application

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Hello,

My name is Math Trafton, and I live in Sitka near the end of Indian River. I recently received notice of application and public hearing (P 25-03) for a preliminary plat review for planned unit development at 600 Yaw Drive. I am not able to attend the public hearing tomorrow at 7pm, but I wanted to voice concerns about building on the muskeg area in particular and the damage that could do to the existing waterways in the area, affecting water flow, particularly with Indian River.

I couldn't tell from the documentation, but do you know if a hydrogeological study has been performed and whether the results are available?

Thank you for your time!
-Math