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HOPATCONG — It's back to the drawing board for a developer proposing a large senior housing development along Sparta-Stanhope Road.

The borough's Planning Board voted unanimously Tuesday against granting the Freehold-based developer, D.R. Horton, another extension on its application. The decision requires the developer to submit a new application.

"I don't see a difference in granting the extension or not," board member John Armeno said. "I feel when the applicant comes in again they will have to start from scratch. It's exactly the same."

D.R. Horton has been searching since last fall for water and sewerage sources to serve its proposed 662-unit senior housing development on 306 acres along Sparta-Stanhope Road. The firm has requested numerous extensions since it last appeared before the board last fall. It is now looking at on-site water. It has also discussed purchasing 100,000 gallons of sewer service from neighboring Stanhope.

Peter Lijoi, the firm's vice-president of land acquisition, updated the board Tuesday on its progress.

"We are currently waiting for (state Department of Environmental Protection) permits to complete pump tests on wells drilled last year," Lijoi said. "We hope to come back before Thanksgiving with an application for preliminary site plan approval."

The firm is also awaiting a Letter of Interpretation to determine if wetlands will further restrict development on the property. DEP officials have said they are processing the request and a response is expected within two to four weeks, Lijoi said.

Once the permits are received, the developer plans to start pump tests which should take four weeks to complete, Lijoi said.

"It's partly the amount of time that has gone by," board Chairman Scott Wallis said of the board's decision. "And we want to see that the water and sewer available can support the development. That's what we've been waiting for the whole time."

Board professionals have asked D.R. Horton to prove it has enough water and sewer capacity to support its project.

"We have needed to prove we have enough water and sewer availability for the entire site," Lijoi said.

Lijoi said re-submitting an application would be a burden but offered to bring witnesses who had already testified back if changes were made to the application.

The board's attorney William Haggerty noted that a lot depends on the outcome of the wetlands

determination.

"The wetlands delineation is adverse to this application," Haggerty said. "Depending on how it comes back it could change the entire application."

Lijoi would not give a timeframe of when D.R. Horton would re-submit its application, but said it would be completed.

"They have that discretion," Lijoi said. "We will make sure the application is ready when we bring it to the board."