

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD MEETING OF JANUARY 10, 2011
AT THE JESSE SMITH LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM
SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m., Jeff Partington, Chairman, presiding.

Members Present: Jeff Partington, Marc Tremblay, Leo Felice, Bruce Ferreira, Jim Libby, Dov Pick, Christopher Desjardins and Jeff Presbrey.

Others Present: William Guertin & Michael Lima, PUD, Joseph Raymond, Building/Zoning Official, Thomas Kravitz, Planning & Economic Development Director, and Christine Langlois, Deputy Planner.

II. ATTENDANCE REVIEW:

The Chairman acknowledged that Mr. Lupis was away on business.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

The **minutes of the Planning Board meeting of December 6, 2010** were read. *A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Ferreira, seconded by Mr. Desjardins and carried unanimously by the Board.*

IV. CORRESPONDENCE: none.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

Major Land Development:

Comprehensive Permit: Pascoag Village Development, South Main Street, Reservoir Road & George Eddy Drive, Pascoag; Map 210, Lot 23: *Informational Meeting/Master Plan Review:* Attorney William Landry, Project Manager Terri Barbosa, of NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley, Architect John O'Hearne, of O'Hearne Associates, Landscape Architect Diane Soule, of Diane Soule & Associates, and Professional Engineer Scott Moorehead, of S.F.M. Engineering Associates were in attendance to represent the request. For the benefit of the members of the audience, Mr. Kravitz explained that the project is an affordable housing project submitted in response to the State's legislative changes in 2003 and the requirement that cities and towns maintain 10% of their housing stock as affordable. He offered a brief history of the past submission's review by the Board and the process that will follow for the next levels of submission. He highlighted other areas in Town that address affordable housing (Stillwater Heights Elderly Complex, Stillwater Mill Clocktower Project, and Pascoag Grammar School). He also informed the audience that the plan was reviewed by the inter-local government staff which included the Town Manager, the DPW Director, the Sewer Commission, the Harrisville Water District, the Pascoag Utility District, the Pascoag Fire Chief, the Conservation Commission, the School Department, Cox Communications and Verizon. He then turned the meeting over to the development team for their presentation.

Attorney William Landry began the presentation by stating that it has been approximately 15 months since the conceptual plan submission to the Board in November 2009 and that the project has changed a bit since then. The Board had provided a list of concerns which

the developer attempted to address, such as shifting units from the eastern area (Fernwood development) to the western portion (Greenridge development), preserving open space, achieving certain economies in the way that the development is planned and clustered. Because the developer is a non-profit and 100% of the units are affordable, they depend heavily on public subsidies, both federal and state, with RI Housing owning the land. These subsidies have a lot to do with the way the development is planned. He noted that if they were private developers, there would be more flexibility, with being allowed to have a majority of the units as market rate. This is more like a government project, with no real profit from the development.

With that said, Attorney Landry told the Board that the plan presents two separate neighborhoods, each addressing a different need within the community for attainable housing. He noted the first neighborhood, referred to as Fernwood and located off of Reservoir Road, is a 45-unit, single-family detached development with 3-bedrooms and 100% affordable. The second neighborhood, referred to as Greenridge and located off of South Main Street, is a 75-unit, rental development designed to meet the current need for rental housing. It will consist of three (3) one-bedroom units, nineteen (19) two-bedroom units and fifty-three (53) three-bedroom units. He noted that one of the concerns from the Board at their review was to minimize the density in the Fernwood neighborhood area. Originally the plan called for the construction of 75 homes in that area, with a lower number of rental units in the Greenridge neighborhood. The number has been switched to eliminate development pressure off of Reservoir Road. He added that both developments will be serviced by public sewer and water with letters of availability in hand. Each neighborhood will be connected by walking paths but not by any road network.

Attorney Landry further explained that the term affordable housing refers to units benefiting individuals who earn from 80-100% of median income – working families – not a public-housing type occupancy. Purchasers of the homeownership units will have to qualify for mortgages and be credit-worthy. He also added that it would probably be about a year after the Master Plan approval before all of the necessary approvals are obtained to proceed with the Preliminary Plan submission. He then turned the meeting over Terri Barbosa, the Project Manager, to offer a brief description of the developer, NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley, and their past accomplishments.

Ms. Barbosa stated that the mission of NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley is to provide affordable housing. She noted that they have been in business for over 22 years and have developed approximately 300 affordable housing units, both in homeownership and rental. They have also developed several community centers and reconditioned a former schoolhouse in Woonsocket with a most recent project currently under development, the Stillwater Mill Clocktower building. She pointed out that when reviewing the housing needs in Northern Rhode Island, what stands out the most is rental housing. There are simply not enough rental units to meet the demand. Attorney Landry then turned the meeting over to the architect, John O'Hearne to show how the Greenridge neighborhood would look.

Utilizing the slides displayed on the screen by Mr. Kravitz, Mr. O'Hearne told the Board that with the shifting of units from Fernwood to Greenridge, they were able to increase

the lot width size of the Fernwood lots from 55 feet to 75 feet, allowing for 20 feet between buildings as displayed in Slide 1. The second slide provided a general streetscape view. He explained that the unit designs were simple, with some of proposed units having a typical colonial look. They will have an open floor plan: kitchen, dining room, living room, with three bedrooms. He noted that they have tried to retain the view sheds, by maintaining the natural, wooded areas and retaining the existing farmhouse with its wooded coniferous area and adjacent field.

In regards to the Greenridge neighborhood, Mr. O'Hearne displayed an animated video which provided a 3-D view of the entire neighborhood, describing each aspect of the neighborhood while the video traveled through the development. The plan has been revised to change from three-family units to duplex units. The natural trees along the front of the property will remain, with two common areas, one .5 acre area and the other 1.5 acres, within the development. The second common area will contain a mixed residential-community center. There will be three one-bedroom units on the second floor with a small community center and several offices on the first floor. Two places have been proposed for mail delivery, one which is located in front of the community center. Attorney Landry then turned the meeting over to Diane Soule, landscape architect.

Ms. Soule told the Board that she has proposed street trees in the "bump out" areas, as shown in the video, maintaining a theme for the Greenridge development, as well as street trees along the perimeter of the roadway. She explained that upon entering the development there will be a nice landscaped area, with hedges and flowering shrubs along each side of the entryway. The first town common area will have a walking path that runs through it with contoured berms along the path to offer a nice feeling as one walks the path. The path will then terminate at a gazebo and a wider paved area for the residents to gather for outdoor neighborhood events. The second village common provides a nice grassy area with a deck on the back of the community center. She then told the Board that the proposal provides for low fencing and hedges along the outer edge of the sidewalks, providing a pallet of landscape materials that unifies the project. She noted that the intent is to keep many of the existing trees during construction. Attorney Landry then turned the meeting over to Scott Moorehead, civil engineer and land surveyor.

Referencing the development plan, Mr. Moorehead told the Board that the entire property consists of 207 acres, the darker green areas, set aside as permanent open space, and comprising 177 acres. Only 30 acres of the property will be developed for multi-family and single-family units, which is represented by the lighter green area on the plan. He then described the topography of the site: ledges and hills in the northern portion; wetlands, streams and a swamp in the center portion; in the Greenridge development area the land slopes down towards South Main Street to the rivers that eventually flow to the south; and in the Fernwood development area the land is relatively flat with fields and wooded areas.

Referring to the Fernwood development, Mr. Moorehead explained that the proposal was for 45 single-family lots, each lot having 7,500 sq/ft of area. A public road is proposed coming in from Reservoir Road to a turnaround island and then proceeding to a large cul-de-sac at the end. He noted an existing gravel road to the Pascoag Utility wells, which

will be utilized as an emergency access, and will be widened to 15-ft as requested by the local fire department. A small recreational area is proposed adjacent to the cul-de-sac for neighborhood ballgames and passive recreation. The existing farmhouse will remain on a five-acre lot. The drainage will be handled with a number of small drainage basins spaced out within the development in order to mitigate any runoff into the wetlands. Public sewer and water will be brought in from Reservoir Road and will not be all gravity fed due to the ups and downs of the topography, but may require some type of pump station or boosters. He noted that the drainage plans as well as the public sewer and water systems have not been developed as of yet, but will be required at the next level of submission.

Referring to the Greenridge development, Mr. Moorehead then explained that the proposal was for 75 multi-family units off of South Main Street, opposite Lapham Farm Road. Access would be a private, one-way roadway, with sidewalks and walking paths – a pedestrian-friendly development. This development would again be serviced by public water and public sewer – the type of sewerage either through gravity-feed or pump stations – items that will be determined by the Preliminary plan stage. Any proposed drainage would be handled by one large detention basin, located in the rear of the development, which will eventually flow into the adjacent wetlands.

Mr. Moorehead then told the Board that a traffic study was conducted in 2007 when the proposal was for 75 units off of Reservoir Road and 45 units off of South Main Street. The study revealed that traffic volumes on Reservoir Road, South Main Street and Lapham Farm Road were not high. Traffic from each development will not affect the current level on these roads; all intersections will continue to operate at the current levels of A & B. He noted that during the pre-application review the Board expressed concerns with the proposed number of 75 units off of Reservoir Road. In response to those concerns, he noted that the plan has been adjusted to reverse the units to 45 units accessing Reservoir Road and 75 units accessing South Main Street. He added that because the project will take a number of years to complete, it is the intent of the developer to begin the multi-family development first as there is an immediate need for rental housing. The single-family development will be broken into three-phases with 15 units being construction at a time and may run concurrent with the multi-family development. It may take approximately 4-5 years to complete, depending on the market conditions. Any construction may not begin for another 1-2 years, depending on the permitting processes through the State and Town.

Mr. Partington then asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board members.

Mr. Libby stated that the Greenridge development looked very good to him and although there are 75 units proposed, the units are grouped into 28 buildings giving the illusion of 28 large-scale looking homes. Plus the fact that traffic will be entering into an existing intersection minimizing the impact on the development. He suggested that the architectural details be upgraded to reflect what was shown in the 3-D imaging. Referring to the Fernwood development, he noted the architectural photos shown to serve as the inspiration for part of this development were taken from various streets located within the Pascoag village. These houses appear to sit on 75-foot lots, similar to the lot

sizes proposed for the Fernwood development. He noted, however, that when driving on Reservoir Road (which is more consistent with the neighborhood and the surrounding environment), the existing houses provide a more suburban feel within the 100-foot lot dimension. Typical homes in the area are small capes, which are still affordable. He also pointed out that in most of the house layouts, the buildings are placed with the short side of the house facing the roadway – simply because the plan is too compact. In most cases in the Reservoir Road neighborhood, the long sides of the houses are parallel to the road. The proposed lots are just too narrow and the proposal is too dense. He further referenced the Town's Zoning Ordinance (Section 11-6.1 clustering) where the smallest lot size found anywhere in zoning is 12,000 sq/ft; yet the proposal is requesting lot sizes of 7,500 sq/ft. The smallest amount of frontage allowed in any of the zones is 100 feet; the proposal allows for 75 feet. He added that he did not feel comfortable with allowing for a frontage which is less than the least amount allowed by zoning. He noted that the goal was for 100 units; with 75 proposed for Greenridge, the most that should be allowed in Fernwood, in his opinion, is 25 units. The house lots should be increased to a size of 12,000 sq/ft and the road frontage to 100 feet, per lot.

Mr. Libby also noted that the current regulations allow for cul-de-sac roadways to be no more than 1,000 feet in length. The proposed roadway is approximately 3,070 feet in length – an excessively long cul-de-sac. He voiced a willingness to grant some leniency as the roadway has to go by the existing farmhouse. Ultimately the roadway length should be reduced, the number of units should be reduced, and the lot sizes should be increased. He provided a sketch of a 25-unit subdivision to Attorney Landry, Mr. O'Hearne and other members of the Board which reflected his comments. He also provided several building elevations from the existing Reservoir Road neighborhood. He pointed out that if the development were to go forward with the proposed house lot sizes, any future homeowner would experience problems should they consider an expansion of their home. Another concern he noted was that all of the bedrooms in the proposed housing units were located on the second floor, not addressing the option of aging in place. First floor bedrooms could not be provided because the lot sizes are simply too small.

Mr. Ferreira stated that he liked the changes they had made to the plan based upon comments from the Board at their pre-application plan review and the developer working to achieve the Town's affordable housing goals. He noted that he agrees with Mr. Libby about reducing the number of units in the Fernwood development and the ability for a homeowner to grow old in their home. He questioned current ownership of the property. Attorney Landry stated that Rhode Island Housing owns title to the property; NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley is the contractor.

Mr. Felice said that his first impression with the Fernwood development was tall and narrow. He added that Mr. Libby had sufficiently addressed that concern. Based upon the other aspects, everything looks pretty good.

Mr. Tremblay stated that he supports Mr. Libby's suggestion to reduce the number of units proposed for the Fernwood development to 25, thereby shortening the roadway length. He said that he especially liked the public facility component of the development but questioned whether there would be adequate access without having to extend the

access road over the middle wetland area (with the intermittent stream) and still maintain a ball field area. In regards to the Greenridge development, he stated that although the traffic report states that traffic from the development would not affect the current volume, it doesn't mean that there will not be any more cars there – just that the intersection will be able to handle the volume. He pointed out the nice south-west exposure on the hillside and encouraged the developer to investigate incorporating passive solar design into the rental units located on the side of the hill. As the development is affordable housing, a good passive solar design can assist the renters with their utility bills.

Mr. Pick stated that he felt the Fernwood development had a constricted feel, adding that he would like to see a more open type of development. As they have highlighted the amount of open space being preserved, the land should be utilized a little bit better. He questioned why the Greenridge development only allowed three one-bedroom units with no studio apartments proposed – were there demographics that indicated single bedroom or studio apartments were not needed? Ms. Barbosa said that they would review the demographics again but that the current demographics point toward a need for single-family two-bedroom units. She also noted that her experience has shown that individuals prefer two-bedroom units in order to provide them with an office space. Mr. Pick added that because the units are affordable, there are probably individuals in this area who would be interested in having a single bedroom unit or getaway.

Mr. Desjardins stated that he also felt the proposed roadway for the Fernwood development was going to be a problem and agreed with shortening the development and moving the ball field to where the eliminated housing units would be. Referring to the 3-D video, he questioned whether there would be adequate parking in the Greenridge development. Mr. O'Hearne stated that the proposal provides for at least two cars per unit. Mr. Moorehead noted that there are 189 parking spaces being proposed.

Mr. Presbrey also agreed with Mr. Libby regarding the reduction of units on the Fernwood side and reducing the length of the cul-de-sac, adding that the reduction would cut out a fair amount of infrastructure and remove several drainage issues. He noted that he liked the ball field concept but felt the Town had a fair amount of ball fields they currently maintain. Mr. Moorehead said that they had not arrived at whether it would be a town-owned ball field or private. Because of the reduced size lots, the area would provide an informal space for neighborhood kids to play.

Mr. Presbrey then asked that the developer consider adding a bigger buffer between the Greenridge development and the adjacent water tower. Mr. Moorehead said that the existing natural buffer would not be removed. Mr. Presbrey requested a buffer in the area where the dumpsters are proposed as a screen to the adjacent property. He asked if the intersection with Lapham Farm Road would be modified to a "T" intersection as was previously discussed at the pre-application plan review, by bringing it more to a 90° intersection and removing pavement. Mr. Moorehead said he believed it would be as they would be applying shortly to RIDOT for a physical alteration permit for roadway modifications, and that it was his feeling that "Y" intersections do not work well.

Mr. Presbrey also questioned whether public access would be provided to the existing cemetery located in the open space area to the north. If the land would not be dedicated

to the Town, the developer should provide an easement for cemetery access. He further asked that the developer consider allowing public access for Town residents to the trails and walking paths of the open space areas as this proposed development would be creating a burden on current town residents.

The Chairman then asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the audience.

Donna Hall questioned where the runoff from the Greenridge side would go. Mr. Moorehead explained that any drainage would flow into a drainage basin which would then flow into the adjacent wetlands. The drainage basin would allow for treatment of any runoff prior to entering the wetlands to protect the stream and wetlands. He added that drainage system would consist of a two-basin system with oil-water separators.

Phil Cary, of 625 South Main Street, questioned if there was a proposed buffer zone between the Greenridge side and his property on South Main Street. Mr. Moorehead told him that there is some distance between the Greenridge development and his property, and that the developer proposes to retain the natural buffer that currently exists.

Cheryl Ross, of 565 Reservoir Road, questioned where the access to the development was from Reservoir Road. Mr. Moorehead said that the entrance was at the current location of George Eddy Drive, which is an existing gravel roadway to the farmhouse. She voiced concern with increased traffic onto Reservoir Road. Mr. Moorehead told her that although there would be a slight increase in traffic from the development, it would not be enough to impact the area. Mr. Partington added that this was the reason why the Board requested the developer move the bulk of units from Reservoir Road to the South Main Street side.

Natalie Alves, of 336 South Main Street, voiced concerns with any increased traffic from this development onto South Main Street. She cited a bottle neck affect which occurs every weekend where Route 100 and Route 44 meet (in Chepachet). Mr. Moorehead told her that the level of service noted during a traffic study of the area was normal and traffic would only increase slightly from this development

Mark Brizard, of 571 Victory Highway, Mapleville, questioned the impact of this development on the school system and questioned whether an impact study had been conducted. Mr. Kravitz told him that the school department, during their review of the project, had requested the developers conduct an impact study. He noted the developers were working on it and would provide it shortly. Mr. Desjardins questioned whether this would affect the Board's decision and the need for the Town to meet the required 10% of housing stock as affordable should the School Department state there will be an additional 300 children introduced into the system. Mr. Kane stated that it may not have an impact on the Board's decision based upon the findings of fact. Mr. Kravitz said that if there is that much of an impact on the school system, it would definitely be an issue.

Shirley Richards, of 611 South Main Street, voiced concern with the possibility that blasting would be necessary as her property abuts a large section of ledge. She asked what would happen should any damage occur to her property as a result of any blasting.

Mr. Moorehead stated that he did not believe that there would be too much blasting on the site as the Fernwood portion has very good soils; the Greenridge portion would only require blasting if the proposed unit had a walkout basement. Most of the proposed units in Greenridge are slab on grade. Most of the roadways require some filling. Possibly a small amount of blasting would be required for the installation of water and sewer.

Mr. Felice stated that he has had some experience with blasting and proceeded to explain that when any blasting is involved for a project, generally the blasting firm will conduct site visits to structures in unsafe zones to document (by photos) the condition of abutting properties as a precaution should any damage to these properties occur during the blasting event. These companies are also required to carry insurance to protect themselves should any damage occur and the properties require retribution for any damages.

Phil Cary, of 625 South Main Street, questioned whether the property values would be affected by this affordable housing development. Ms. Barbosa stated that the property values would not be affected. Attorney Landry explained that the proposed units were market rate units that would contain a 99-year restriction which would keep them at market rate. Surrounding properties would still retain their existing values.

Bruce Rylah, of 60 George Eddy Drive, questioned whether the lots, for the single family homes proposed for the Fernwood side, would be owned by the homeowners, or would the lots be owned by a private firm and leased to the homeowner. Attorney Landry said that the land would be owned by a non-profit entity, such as the Community Housing Land Trust, and the homeowners would have to pay a rental fee to the Community Housing Land Trust for the land. The houses themselves would be subject to a 99-year affordable restriction. Mr. Rylah then asked if the land would be tax-free because it would be a non-profit. Attorney Landry, in turn, asked Ms. Barbosa if she knew whether it would be taxable by the Town. She said that she did not, but would find out the answer. Mr. Rylah then questioned whether the Greenridge apartments would be owned by the same entity who owns the land. Attorney Landry said that was correct.

Mr. Ferreira asked if a homeowner in the Fernwood development would be allowed to construct an addition to the house if the land was leased. Mr. Kane said that the homeowner would probably have to obtain permission from the homeowners association as well as obtain building permits from the Town.

Scott Rylah, of 55 George Eddy Drive, asked whether the Town would be responsible for maintaining the lighting and road plowing of the Greenridge development. Mr. Partington said that because it was a private roadway and development, it would be maintained by the owners.

Mitch Ethier, of 170 Reservoir Road, questioned whether there would be taxes generated on the open space areas. Mr. Partington told him that the open space, if not owned by the Town, would be owned by the development association, who would be responsible for the taxes. The taxes are at a lower rate due to the fact that no activity takes place on open space areas. Mr. Ethier voiced concerns with being liable if someone were to venture off the trails from the open space onto his property and hurt themselves.

Mr. Ferreira suggested he post signs on his property as a precaution. Mr. Ethier also voiced concerns with increased traffic on Reservoir Road.

Natalie Alves, of 336 South Main Street, questioned whether the plan was a definite project. Mr. Partington explained that it probably was, just as long as the developers are following the proper process in accordance with the Town's regulations and in accordance with State Law. There are still things that need to be done between now and the final approval. He noted that the developer had stated that it would probably be a 2-3 year build-out process. The approval process, however, may occur within the next six-months or so.

Debbie Duquette, of 555 Reservoir Road, stated that a private roadway, known as Ice House Road, off of Reservoir Road, was located immediately opposite the proposed entrance to the project. She questioned how the developer proposed to keep the children, from this development, from accessing the Pascoag Reservoir through this private entrance. Mr. Kravitz suggested that the developers could provide a handout, to the new property owners, as to the location of public access to the reservoir. Other members of the Board suggested "no trespassing" signs posted in the vicinity of Ice House Road.

Donald Fournier, of 399 South Main Street, questioned the amount of road frontage for the Greenridge side fronting on South Main Street. Mr. Moorehead stated that there is approximately 350 feet of frontage for the parcel on that side.

As there were no further questions from the audience, Mr. Kravitz summarized several issues that were brought up this evening, (whether the land under ownership of the non-profit group was subject to property taxes; what type of impact would this development have on the school department – request for an impact statement; whether the developer would be able (financially) to reduce the number of units proposed on the Fernwood side, from 45 to 25) as requested by the Board. He suggested the Board consider continuing this discussion to the next meeting.

For the record, Tim Kane, Town Solicitor, noted that the Town's Comprehensive Plan already contains an allowance for 100 units on this property.

Mr. Desjardins requested a proforma from the developer based upon the reduction of units from the Fernwood side of the development.

Noting that additional information would be necessary before the Board could make a decision on the Master Plan, *a motion to continue the discussion to the February 7, 2011 Planning Board meeting was made by Mr. Tremblay. The motion received a second from Mr. Ferreira and carried unanimously by the Board.*

Mr. Kravitz noted the specific timeframe for the Board's decision in accordance with the Comprehensive Permit approval process. Attorney Landry stated that the developer would not have a problem waiving the requirements should the decision take longer than the required number of days.

A five-minute recess was called at 8:45 p.m.

The meeting then resumed at 8:50 p.m.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Report from Administrative Officer:

Mr. Kravitz noted that during the month of December the following Certificates of Completion were issued: Pascoag Village Development (Comprehensive Permit), South Main Street, Reservoir Road & George Eddy Drive, Pascoag (Master Major Land Development – 120 units); and JJP Pascoag, LLC/CVS, High Street, Pascoag (Major Final Land Development/Administrative). There were no plans rejected as incomplete. The following plan was endorsed: JJP Pascoag, LLC/CVS, High Street, Pascoag (Major Final Land Development/Administrative).

Planning Board Discussions: Having nothing further for discussion, *a motion to adjourn was then made at 9:03 p.m. by Mr. Ferreira, seconded by Mr. Libby and carried unanimously by the Board.*

Recorded by: M. Christine Langlois
M. Christine Langlois, Deputy Planner