

Workforce Housing Commission Minutes
January 20, 2009
Falmouth Town Hall, Large Conference Room

PRESENT:

Housing Commissioners: Lisa Bousquet; Ward Graffam, Chairman; Paul Strout

Town Representatives: Theo Holtwijk, Director Long Range Planning

Developer Representatives: Jim Hatch; Kevin Bunker

Advisor: John Gallagher, Westbrook Housing

Public: Eydie Pryzant; John Graustein; Mark Hough; James Benoit

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Ward Graffam at 6:03 P.M.

- 1. Review and Approval of Minutes:** The Minutes of the November 17th meeting were deferred until the next meeting as no quorum was present.
- 2. Update on Town-Developer process:** Ward gave an update on the meetings that had been held between Town Manager and staff, himself, the developer, and Town Council liaison and Council chair. The goal of these meetings is to prepare a draft Town-Developer Agreement for further discussion. A council update is scheduled for February 9th.
- 3. Continued review of concept plan:** Quite recently a proposal for a child care center at the Woods Road site has surfaced. This could be complimentary to the workforce housing project, but would also have an impact on it. James Benoit and Mark Hough gave an overview of this project. A 10,000 sf one-story building is envisioned with a gym and swimming pool. The maximum capacity would be for 200 children. A minimum 3-acre site is required. Bus drop-off is included. Operation would be between 6 AM and 5 PM. There would be about 25 employees. This is a franchise. Several exist in Greater Portland area. He has looked at Route One sites, but has not been able to locate one.

Commissioners and staff asked questions of Mr. Hough and Benoit. The closest other location of the franchise is in Cumberland. This would be the first one for Mark Hough. As to location on the Woods Road site, Mr. Hough stated he desired to be as close to Woods Road as possible. He stated that his Route One site search was unsuccessful due to lack of appropriate land parcels and acquisition costs. He stated he would prefer to own a portion of the Woods Road site, rather than leasing.

Jim Hatch stated that Phase 1 included 16-18 units of housing. If those were lost, he expected that an equivalent share of development costs would be paid. One use would be traded for another.

It was not known how much traffic the child care center would generate.

It was stated that it was unknown what the population of the housing was going to be and if a child care center would be needed. It was clarified that the center was intended to serve a population well beyond the workforce housing site.

Commissioner Graffam stated that he liked the child care use idea, but felt it had no merit on this site, that it might affect the Town's ability to get housing grants, and that (by possibly deleting the multi family units) it would skew the housing mix. He would mention it to the Council when an update would be made, but would not recommend it.

Commissioner Bousquet had an issue with the amount and kind of traffic that would be generated by the size facility contemplated.

Commissioner Strout felt that a child care center would diminish what the Town is trying to accomplish. He did not want to create a commercial entity at this site.

The Commission wished Mr. Hough and Benoit good luck with their project. Mr. Hough and Benoit were appreciative of the Commission's time and left.

The Commission continued its discussion of the Concept Housing Plan. Jim handed out a sheet that stated the key elements of the concept plan.

The first item was "inclusion of <80% median income targeting to serve Town employees." Commissioners stated that was indeed the aspiration. Spousal income will affect who will fall in that category. Jim felt that this could be tied in to Town hiring, and that employer-assisted housing could be explored. He anticipated that a significant share of the units would go to first-time home buyers. Kevin suggested that the Town could also have right of first refusal when units would be offered for resale. John suggested that it would also be good to look at people that are employed in Falmouth businesses or have some other tie to the Town. This is (proposed to be) done in Freeport and Scarborough.

Jim asked that another question is: who will monitor the affordability covenants? It could be done by a community trust, managing a soft second mortgage in perpetuity. Jim felt it had to be a non-profit organization or a municipality. He had reservations about creating a new non-profit as it may not have the longevity that is required. Commissioners wondered how this issue was handled with the affordable housing project in Cumberland.

It was asked if the developer had looked at options if the anticipated subsidies do not come through. One may get nervous if a project is tied to outside subsidies.

Jim stated that roughly \$70K would be needed for additional subsidy to make a unit available for an 80% median income family versus a 120% median income family.

He felt that the project, as designed, would serve most of the Town employees, and that it was the intent to also serve the lower end of that group. There are few Town salaries that are more than 120% of median income. Again, spousal income will affect eligibility. Theo said he had a handout with Town salary data so the Commission would have that as background info.

The second key element of the plan is “a unit count of about 48 units.” Ward stated he felt the count was about right. Paul stated he was happy with the unit count. Lisa stated she was more concerned with viability and financing.

Discussion of the rest of the concept plan elements was deferred until the next meeting.

- 4. Discussion on public outreach:** This item was deferred until the next meeting.
- 5. Presentation on Community Facilities Planning Project:** Theo presented information on the Community Facilities Planning Project. He handed out a flyer and invited all to register for and attend the March 12th event for that. There were no questions.
- 6. Next meeting:** Next meeting will be February 23rd at 6:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Theo Holtwijk