

**Town of Wayland  
Economic Development Committee  
May 10, 2013  
Meeting Minutes**

All members present: Stanizzi, Uveges, Potter, Milburn, Watkins, Willard

Guests: Presenters Budge Upton, Scott Dale, Jim Williamson; Residents Don Bustin, Linda Segal, Cynthia Hill, Molly Upton, Ed Collins, Bill Sterling (not all present for entire meeting)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Stanizzi in Selectmen's Meeting Room at 8:30 am

Public Comment: no formal comment; there was subsequent dialogue with public attendees

Activity: The Committee heard presentations and comment from three individuals representing real estate development companies. The primary purpose of the presentations was to provide perspective to the Committee on the subject of affordable/residential housing generally and Rivers Edge in particular. The Committee has been debating the question of age-restricted senior housing as it is acknowledged that age-restricted housing projects are harder than unrestricted to rent, but may carry more desirable outcomes.

The first presenter was Budge Upton, head of Upton Partners, a local development firm currently completing a 200+ unit development in Arlington. Budge covered a lot of ground:

- pre-permitting of the property adds considerable value to the developer/town and reduces risk
- projects must be over 100 units for operational efficiency; over 200 units "gets a lot of investor interest"
- age-restriction, such as the proposed 75%, heightens risk that the housing would not be as easily rentable, however, he sees the site as an opportunity as well as a restriction; it's all about whether the demand is there to fill the housing. Upton Partners is definitely interested in bidding. He emphasized that the price would reflect the risk.
- Hazardous waste/environmental is a concern, but manageable. Location next to a capped landfill has a negative effect, but the rents/amenities will be a bigger factor in the overall appeal of the project.
- Long term ownership is an important factor for the town to consider, to maintain the quality of the development
- Budge has preliminarily discussed River's Edge concept with his equity partners and they "love Wayland." He suggested that the equity providers in a deal like River's Edge would want clarity and transparency in the bid process, and that he could get a firm impression of equity interest within a couple weeks of a bid package which outlines key project variables: site, density, style, number of units, zoning implications, etc. A full bid submittal (drawings, etc) should be able to be completed approx 90 days after the bid package and an initial Q&A.

The second presenter was Scott Dale from Avalon Bay, a large developer of rental housing, from garden apartments to high-rises, over 65,000 units owned. After describing his company's operations, Scott got right to the issue of whether a 216-unit project with a 55+ age restriction would be of interest to Avalon Bay: the answer is no, and he offered explanations:

- Avalon does not like to limit their market, they do not do age-restricted housing

- the turnover at their projects is typically 40-50% per year, and so while the market for over 55 renters may fill at the outset, it will be too thin to maintain full occupancy in the long run if you're only targeting 15% of the market [he later ceded that age-restricted units would probably have less turnover]
- in order to stay full, rents may need to be lower than market
- he was concerned that the growth in senior market was slowing or not as strong [However, when he referred to statistics, seniors are estimated to grow by 4.5% over the next 10 years, while 18-35, the other active demographic, will grow by 4%]
- the Route 20 location is "perfect" for leasing visibility, which is important with 40-50% turnover, they are reselling every year. An "off track" location would mean higher marketing costs just to get people there. 70% of their leasing comes from the internet, so visibility is less important than it once was, but still important.
- locating next to a landfill is not a problem. They have a project in Cohasset adjacent to a capped landfill and the landfill "doesn't deter at all"
- environmental issues are manageable, they rely on their LSP (licensed site professional) to verify the site is safe; they have done under-slab ventilation systems before, even when not required, just as good practice.
- 160 -216 units would do fine as a project size in Wayland. 200 is a good number operationally for Avalon.
- Parking for similar complexes run 1.5 – 1.7 spaces per unit. 1.8 spaces per unit "would do it" for a safe number here.
- A minimum 160+ unit development is preferable for Wayland, they would market it as an upscale complex with amenities and probably mix in some lower density, 2-story/townhomes and separate entrances, similar to Marlborough. When reminded that Wayland has an 8 acre site, not 11-12+, he said they would likely go more dense (3-4 story) at River's Edge in order to maintain that key 160+ minimum
- a development with a much lower age restriction limitation, say 25% instead of 75%, might be something they would be interested in, but it is clear that Avalon perceives the age restriction of any kind as a major hurdle. He estimated a 5% discount in rents at a 20-25% age-restricted development.
- The third developer on the agenda, Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly (JCHE) could not make it – will be rescheduled

An additional builder we heard from was Jim Williamson from Barberry Homes, which primarily does single family homes, but also has done 40B and 40R housing, recently in Walpole (176 units) and Natick (150 units). While not as big as Avalon or Upton, Jim had some strong recommendations:

- eliminate the age restriction to make the task of renting much easier
- if we do go ahead with an age restriction, don't bake the percentage into the new zoning by-law. Better, in Jim's opinion, to manage impact of schoolchildren by unit size and number of bedrooms alone, not put the project in a niche which it could be stuck in in the future for re-leasing if the market turns. [It was explained to Jim that schoolchildren were not driving the over-55 designation, we recognize that issue is more controlled by unit size; the over-55 criteria has more to do with broader criteria such as community, housing needs, parking requirements/unit sizes/counts, amenities and traffic.]
- build what is do-able, not necessarily exactly what you would like. Don't let overzealous protectors of the public welfare make the deal totally unattractive to bidders, like the Natick parking garage site that was so burdened with conditions (height, parking, 50% affordability) by the town that no one bid.
- visibility of the complex is very important, a sentiment echoing Avalon Bay's comments. The Route 20 location is excellent, particularly for rental housing. The River Road site would, by extension, be far less desirable to rental-unit developers.

Meeting minutes: minutes for the following meetings were approved 6-0 as amended: January 29, February 22, February 26, March 14, March 26,27 (open houses), April 4, April 12, April 25

Filing of ethics training and OML paperwork completed and filed by most members; last ones to complete by May 16 meeting.

Goals:

A fall town meeting has not been called yet, but there seems to be a general sense one is likely. In order to call it, 200 signatures (thought to be the case by audience members; to be confirmed) are required; to be added onto an agenda, e.g. if DPW calls the meeting, for River's Edge to get on it, 100 signatures would be required. If a meeting is called in October, articles would need to be completed approx. two months' prior, so EDC needs to schedule backward to get items resolved in time.

Primary goals of EDC for River's Edge were discussed at length, to help resolve prioritization of age-restriction, 40B, revenues and project viability, while reviewing the scope and goals of River's Edge as we move forward.

There is considerable sentiment in favor of maintaining our focus on the original 216-unit proposal that was narrowly defeated at Town Meeting. On the other hand, a pared-down proposal, say for 160 units, also has strong backing, although it would in many ways negate the original goals. Whether the age restriction be loosened for the sake of viability is a fundamental question. It was clear from our extended attempt to clarify and prioritize the choices before us that there are key variables related to every proposal, but no single variable (such as number of units, likely number of additional children in the system, amenities, parking, wireless district resolution, etc) sufficient in itself to effectuate one or the other. Discussion will continue with the goal of being concluded at next meeting.

Town Meeting review and feedback:

Wireless District: Only the wireless district was discussed, given the lateness of the hour but recognizing that Ed Collins was in attendance to discuss. Mark Lanza had drafted a proposed change to the River's Edge zoning so that REHOD would not conflict with the Wireless District (WCOD). EDC and Ed Collins concluded that the drafting still needs work for better clarity.

A plan by Alf Berry was reviewed outlining the WCOD areas unaffected by residential at the River's Edge site – the remaining potential area for cell towers includes the transfer station area, which is a natural location, and then the remaining National Grid poles along the main line (outside the view of the plan, which focused on the landfill area). A revised plan with better line delineation and wider scope of the district apparently is in the works; to be posted as available. Review ongoing.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:36.

Submitted by N. Willard.