

Minutes Housing Partnership April 12, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 8 pm. Present were Mary Antes, Rachel Bratt, Kathy Boundy, Dan Brown, Marty Nichols, and Betty Salzberg.

To discuss the Lee's Farm project, Joan Blair and Marji Ford of LEES (Lets Enable Environmental Stability), Sarkis Sarkisian, town planner, Kent Greenawalt of the Planning Board and Brian Boggia were present.

Dev Hamlin developer of the Covered Bridge project on Rice Road was also present as there was some question of combining his Farm stand, or his contributions under the Inclusionary law with the Lee's Farm project.

Rachel Bratt moved to approve the minutes of March 8, 2010 and Kathy Boundy seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Joan Blair presented the LEES concept, which is to have 1.2 acres for farming, a 200-foot buffer from Pine Brook and about 15 units of housing, which under the inclusionary law would have to include at least 2 affordable units. She noted that if CPA moneys were involved, possibly more units could be affordable. The goal of LEES is to have as few housing units as possible and still be able to buy the land from the owners.

Dev Hamlin remarked that in his opinion, talk about CPA money should not be involved in negotiations with the owner; the value of the land is what a developer would be willing to pay for it.

There was some disagreement about how much vegetables you could produce on 1.2 acres and whether it would support both Community Supported Agriculture (CSA, where people buy shares and get vegetables each week) and a farm stand.

Marji Ford, a member of LEES and a real estate agent, noted that an alternative plan of a 65-unit assisted living with three stories would decrease neighbor's property values. She also mentioned the historic view space and said it was the last open space on route 20.

Joan Blair also saw the proposed project as a way to involve the religious communities (Shir Tikva, the Islamic Center and the First Parish are interested in the CSA aspect). There are 300 names on the LEES mailing list.

Rachel Blatt and Betty Salzberg remarked that the 2 units out of 15 was required in any case from the inclusionary law, so that to get support of the housing partnership for LEES use of CPA money, more affordable units would have to be proposed.

Sarkis explained that a conservation cluster with the 15 units as proposed could be a possibility. He also noted that a developer could put in a larger assisted living project with a special permit. The land is partly zoned for roadside business and partly for

residential, so no new zoning would be needed and no town meeting vote would be needed for either possibility.

After the LEES presentation, a discussion took place about the contribution of the Covered Bridge Project under the inclusionary law. Dev Hamlin does not want to have the affordable housing on site and other possibilities have been proposed. For example, a small house on School Street and route 30 is on the market and he has been proposed to buy this house for the town, and add an additional one-bedroom accessible unit, making this a two-unit house with one unit two bedrooms and one unit one bedroom. The town would then become the owner of the land and fix the direction of the driveway so part of East Plain Road east of School Street could be blocked off, making the intersection safer. It was proposed to make this a rental property.

There were no really positive reactions to this proposal. Had the housing been on-site, at least two three-bedroom units in a very desirable bucolic setting (although with a long driveway) had been the alternative. As it was proposed that this be the lot for the affordable units, Rachel asked why not exchange with another lot with a shorter driveway which would be easier to maintain. Hamlen said he was opposed to this idea and the planning committee had already approved the lot with the long driveway.

No one on the WHP thought that the proposed off-site house on School street was equal in value to units that might have been constructed on site. It was felt that units off-site should be at least equal in value to the proposed ones on site.

Marty Nichols moved that a letter be written to the planning board expressing the view that the WHP expects that the value of off-site units be financially at least as valuable as on-site units would have been, as provided for in the inclusionary by-law.

Betty Salzberg seconded the move to write the letter and the vote was unanimous.

Also in this letter, members said that it should be pointed out that the house on School street, even with an additional one-bedroom unit, did not meet this criterion for the Covered Bridge project. Discussion also suggested that a two to one ration of bedrooms off-site to on-site was desirable.

It should be considered a special privilege to satisfy the inclusionary law off-site. One goal of the inclusionary law is scattered affordable housing and off-site choices are usually confined to Cochituate due to the high prices in the more northern parts of town.

Rachel moved to oppose the town warrant article to transfer the Doran Road properties to the Conservation Commission based on the need for a feasibility study.

Dan seconded and the vote was unanimous.

Mary said even concom thought the property should be mixed use. Rachel and Kathy

felt that a feasibility study as proposed by the housing authority should take place first. There was some possibility that funding for a community septic system could be combined with a modest amount of affordable housing (about 8 units) on this 7 plus acre parcel. Everyone was concerned with the effect on the Pond and with the lack of open space in this dense neighborhood, but it was felt that the septic issues, especially how to fund community use, were not settled.

The next WHP meeting will be on May 3, (not the second Monday of the month) so that we can have a public hearing about the proposed Habitat housing on Stonebridge road. Betty will get notices put in area newsletters and newspapers about this meeting. Habitat representatives will work with WHP and WHA to make a presentation of this article at town meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:45 pm.

Betty Salzberg