

**West Concord Advisory Committee,**  
**a subcommittee of the Planning Board**  
**January 4, 2017**

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the West Concord Advisory Committee (WCAC) was held at 7:30 p.m. in the Clock Tower Room at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center.

**Members Present:**

Steve Irza, Chair  
Carlene Hempel  
Burton Flint  
Peter DeRosa  
Kathryn Garcia  
Mike Nowicki  
Peter Baty, Clerk  
Jeff Collins  
Don Detweiler

**Members Absent:**

None

7:30 p.m. - Introduction to WCAC by Carlene Hempel. Introduction to Concord Housing Development Corporation (CHDC) and the present representative, Phil Posner.

7:35 p.m. - Phil Posner provides overview of the proposed Christopher Heights of Concord at Junction Village development. A permit application has been submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and the Natural Resources Commission (NRC). Phil presented a history of property ownership. Some key comments included the following

- The town is not the owner of the property – the CHDC is the owner.
- The property is deed restricted for low income housing and open space.
- CHDC solicited proposals for the property's development and selects The Grantham Group's proposal.
- Grantham plans to accept Concord residents as priority tenants, if requested. Specifics to be determined.
- Approximate direct economic benefits for the town: ~\$75k taxes, ~30 jobs, support W. Concord businesses.
- The project is considered key to Concord's commitment to affordable housing. Concord is currently below the 10% state requirement and this development will allow Concord to remain above the requirement until ~2030. It will also allow independence from 40-B.

- Financing of the project: Subsidies are required for affordable housing (federal, state, and town). As the overall economy has improved, the costs for development of the project have increased; therefore, additional funding is required from Concord (~3M).

7:53 p.m. - Walter Ohanian, representative of The Grantham Group provided a brief introduction to The Grantham Group and the process of development of low income housing. Mr. Ohanian then provided an overview of the proposed development. Specifically he discussed the three zoning issues currently under consideration: a lack of required frontage for the building; an increase of more than three feet in the allowed height of the building; and a proposal to rezone the property from industrial to residential.

### **Q&A – WCAC**

- *Are units private?* Yes, units can be kept locked. Staff will knock to
- *Is staff unionized?* No, staff is not unionized. Mix of hourly and salaried staff.
- *What are the components of West Concord Design Guidelines implemented for this project?* Overall exterior design, color scheme, LEED rating (potentially silver), stonework, landscaping, etc.
- *What is the current plan for the remaining undeveloped portion of the property?* The undeveloped portion of the property would remain unimproved for the time being (i.e., not part of the current development proposal). Input and funding would be required from other town agencies to utilize this land.
- *Who has right-of-way at the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail crossing?* This issue needs to be further explored, but it is recognized that certain warning features will need to be implemented.
- *With regard to the “Concord preference” – do other communities have this?* 70% of residents have a direct relationship to the town they’re in; 20% neighboring towns; 10% other.
- *What will the truck traffic look like?* Limited delivery and trash truck traffic – all truck traffic will occur during the day.
- *How does the cost share for Concord compare to that provided by other towns for previous Grantham Group projects?* The share for Concord is higher than for other towns. Other towns have provided site/pad-ready properties; the Concord site requires a significant site/utility development costs. Tax credits and other funds are fixed amounts; therefore, as project costs increase, the portion of the town’s share increases disproportionately.
- *The project is requesting \$3M from Concord - Is there risk that this number could increase?* No, the project is budgeted with 10% contingency built in and no additional costs are anticipated. Grantham Group has a track record of six previous developments to back this statement up.
- *What is the anticipated impact of the residents on the local community?* Residents typically walk and very few own cars; therefore, they will not

- contribute significantly to the local traffic/parking issues. Residents also tend to be very active in the local community – seeking opportunities to give back.
- *What is the anticipated ambulance traffic?* Based on other Grantham Group facilities, approximately four 911 emergency calls per month and four non-emergency medical calls.

## **Q&A – Public**

- *Dorrie Kehoe – Significant concerns about the transparency of the project overall.* In response to the concerns voiced through this process, the CHDC's meetings will be public going forward. Although CHDC is a non-profit and not subject to open meeting laws; past meeting minutes will be posted and meetings will be open going forward.
- *Julie Hirschler – Concerns as to whether Concord residents will ultimately be allowed to have preference. Concerns regarding the high concentration of low income housing.* Up to 70% of affordable units in the first round (~30 units) will have Concord preference.
- *Cheryl MacDonald – Concerned about traffic in West Concord, which is already bad and has the potential to get worse due to this proposed development.* This site is landlocked, with the exception of an emergency route through MCI. A traffic impact study was performed in 2013 and is available for review.
- *Margaret Hipple – can it be confirmed that no additional development will occur at the property?* Yes, Mr. Posner confirmed.
- *Jimmy Two Feathers – Concerns about the size/scale of the building and reiterating concerns that the traffic study needs to be performed during rush hours.*
- *Peter Fulton – Concerns about transparency, number of ambulance runs, and concerns about contamination (proposed driveway is located where the former septic discharge fields were located and where waste was dumped). Proposal to relocate the driveway from Winthrop Street to run parallel to the BFRT, connecting to Commonwealth Ave.* Several environmental studies have been performed by 3<sup>rd</sup> party consultants (ENSTRAT). Environmental conditions at the site are considered suitable for residential development and no further assessments were considered necessary. Mr. Posner indicated that there is not adequate room along the BFRT to consider installing a driveway to run parallel.
- *Resident - What would happen if the ZBA does not approve the comprehensive permit which includes some code waivers?* If the public does not support this project (via the planning board, ZBA, and NRC), the project will not move forward. The Planning Board meeting is scheduled for February 9.
- *Resident - What's the construction timeline if the project is ultimately approved?* Construction isn't anticipated to begin until 2018 and the construction period is expected to take approximately one year once initiated.

*WCAC Options: Vote for a letter of support; vote to support with conditions; vote of no support.*

Motion to acknowledge the concerns regarding density, traffic, burdens on public services, but vote to support the project given the six key issues below (irrespective of financial considerations, which are to be considered by other town representatives).

1. That current Concord residents be given preference for leases in the development. Mr. Ohanian said that preference would only be honored for the first round of leases, but WCAC would like the local preference stipulation to be extended.
  2. That the Grantham Group be required to spell out what he will do to make the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail crossing on the site safe for trail users and motorists.
  3. That the Grantham Group and/or CHDC put more foresight into planning the open space portion of the property. As of now, there is no expressed plan for public access to the greater parcel. Access to open space is specifically mentioned in the West Concord Village Master Plan as well as in the mandate for this property.
  4. That the police and fire departments be asked to take into consideration the fact that this facility will be located in a residential neighborhood; therefore, emergency response vehicles should be encouraged to limit the use of sirens traveling to and from Christopher Heights.
  5. That the Grantham Group creates a more attractive vegetative visual buffer between the rail trail and the facility. The plans as presented do not show any such consideration.
  6. That the Grantham Group investigates installing a retaining wall at the edge of the driveway that falls inside the 100-foot buffer zone of the wetlands to the east.
- Seven (7) Yay - Carlene Hempel, Burton Flint, Peter DeRosa, Mike Nowicki, Peter Baty, Jeff Collins, Don Detweiler
  - One (1) Nay - Steve Irza
  - One (1) Abstains - Kathryn Garcia

**ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to adjourn, at 10:20 p.m. and to conclude business for the evening.

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next regular meeting will be held Wednesday, February 1, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Baty

Minutes unanimously approved on: March 2, 2017