

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2008

6:00 PM

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Council President Frank Baldorossi.

Sunshine Statement

The Township Clerk read the following statement: Notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was published in the Burlington County Times on Sunday, 7-27-08; given to the Register News on 7-22-08; posted on the municipal bulletin board on 7-22-08.

Roll Call

Present: Dennis O'Hara; Sean Ryan; Jerry Sandusky; Frank Baldorossi
Bruce Garganio (6:15 PM)

Mayor William Berry; Richard Brook, Township Administrator;
William John Kearns, Jr., Township Solicitor; Mary Beth Lonergan,
Special COAH Planner; Joy Weiler, Township Clerk

Public Comments

Council President Baldorossi opened the meeting to the public for comments.

No public comments at this time. Closed to the public: Motion by Jerry Sandusky to close the public comment portion of the meeting; seconded by Sean Ryan. Roll call vote – all ayes.

Business: Duffy School Proposals – Affordable Housing

Township Administrator, Richard Brook, asked Ms. Lonergan to explain tax credits. Ms. Lonergan reviewed low income housing tax credits the developer would be able to obtain. Grant subsidies from DCA; two levels of tax credits; balance housing money; county housing money; federal home loan also available. There are approximately seven sources for funding.

The developers will be looking for 9% tax credits. Also, to use historic tax credits.

NOTE: Council Member Garganio present at this time.

If the developer is building the addition to the Duffy School building and saving the historic portion of the gymnasium, they would be eligible for the historic tax credits.

Brief discussion of the relationship with the developer during the future years, possibly 30 years, with the Duffy School Affordable Housing Project.

Spg 3: New Communities Corp.

Proposal: 49 units with one on-site manager; 33 off-street parking units; (1) bedroom units.

Neil Reggojo from Spg3 introduced those present at the meeting. Bob Casaway, Vice President of Spg3; Paul McDonald from J.J. DeLuca Company and Stanley Steele, Project Manager.

Mr. Steele spoke regarding 40 years of experience; faith based firm. He noted that he resides in Burlington County.

Paul McDonald, Vice President of J.J. DeLuca Co. discussed his company. Discussed past projects.

Their company worked on the expansion of Masonic Home Medical Center in Burlington, NJ. The project was a 55 million dollar project.

Worked on the Scottish Rite Fellowship Center in Bordentown, NJ.

Also, 4200 Mitchell Street in Philadelphia, PA. It was an historic building. The financing was very similar to this project.

Working on multiple housing projects; have the ability to work on the Duffy School project.

Based out of Springfield, PA and work within an hour and half radius.

Mr. Bob Casaway, Vice President of Spg 3, noted that they are an international group, which has been in business for over 30 years.

Mr. Casaway discussed his philosophy on communities and the social atmosphere. Building homes for people; try to build with individual touches.

They are committed to the historic tax credit; green future requirements; energy efficient; new communities are looking at quality of life. Retain existing fabric of the building. Playground would be used for community garden and small tot lot for the community.

Energy efficiency use of rainwater planned for irrigation. Keep the stair towers; individual central air; cable TV and Internet access; library for residents.

Funding discussed by Mr. Steele. Medium income and low income discussed. Spg3 are familiar with funding sources.

Security discussed; keyed entry planned.

Preserve the housing as affordable housing; want to be part of the community.

Hope to have the Duffy School designated as an historic building.

Council Member Sean Ryan asked about the gymnasium; Neil Reggojo stated that it would not stay as it is.

Council Vice President Dennis O'Hara suggested rather than a tot lot to have a gazebo.

Council Member Jerry Sandusky asked about having a great room for the community to visit and perform shows, etc. They expect to build a serving kitchen in a great room; would hold approximately 50 people.

Activities would be planned for the residents.

Council Member Bruce Garganio asked about the historic funding; when would they know if they would have it? Neil Reggojo stated that a letter of intent would start the historic designation process and they would apply for the historic tax credits.

The tax credit requirements are that the historic windows, etc. be preserved and maintained for five years.

Spg3 would pledge \$400,000 developer fee, which would be pledged to the development. Sources would be sought for adding up to the \$1.6, if the historic tax credits not given.

There are a lot of "unknowns"; doing the best with what is known.

Mary Beth Lonergan asked about the minimum age of 62 and older. Developer's Agreement would be entered into with the township regarding the age restriction.

Mary Beth Lonergan asked Spg3 since the township would be donating the land, would they provide a longer period of affordability control longer than the 30 years?

Also, if they would build a few two bedroom units? Response was that if they could; they would; they are trying to keep the 49 units.

13% of all units would be for very low-income units. Ms. Lonergan asked if they could accommodate that? Spg3 responded that they would try to comply and make it work.

Discussion held regarding considering factoring in “special needs”; it opens up funding. If the town is open to that, they are also.

Regarding COAH requirements and compliance, Ms. Lonergan asked if they are fully compliant? They responded that they are.

Township Solicitor asked how and why they believe they are different from the other three proposals? Mr. Steele stated that all four companies are good options. The developers all know each other; all are good companies.

Mr. Steele believes they are experts; service comes first; faith based; social purpose; will not leave; build and stay to manage. It is more than to make the money. Have a past record for their service and work. Their “mission” is what distinguishes them.

MEND/Conifer

Matthew Reilly, President and CEO of MEND, introduced Samuel Leone and Mary Johansson, from Kitchen and Associates, Architectural Services, a Pennsylvania firm.

Proposal for: 48 one bedroom units, with 26 parking spaces, age restricted to 62 years and over.

Mr. Reilly gave an overview of MEND and their proposal.

The organization is a 39 year old, non-profit corporation, which is based in Moorestown, NJ. They were offering affordable housing in Burlington County for low income before the Mt. Laurel decision and mandate.

Delanco project on Burlington Avenue has a 10-unit facility with commercial unit. Various projects discussed.

In 2006 MEND signed for a 36-unit facility in Medford. Still working with the town. They did not win the tax credit units for that project. The state's current allocation now favors urban and not suburban. They will reapply in 2009; hope that the state will change their position.

MEND has used every available funding possible for their projects.

The former Lenola school building located in Moorestown was in 1988 renovated for 33 units of senior affordable housing. Other projects review and discussed.

MEND stated that they are very interested in working with the town on the Duffy School project. They believe the building is in an excellent location. They want to "partner with the town." MEND prides themselves in working in a cooperative way with the towns they work with. MEND wins excellence awards each year.

The building will be "forever" for affordable housing for seniors.

Proposing 36 units in existing building; 12 units in an extension; 26 on site parking spaces.

Mr. Sam Leone, Project Coordinator from Conifer Realty introduced. Conifer's history discussed; financially strong; management and development strong. They are a "for profit" developer.

Full service realty company; own and manage properties; manage longer term; 32 years as a company.

Currently have 9,000 units in four states; 2,000 in NJ. Lindenwold, NJ has a MEND project. Energy star rating of 64, which is very efficient. Built on former sewer treatment plant site. They have worked with historic buildings, schools and a convent.

Mary Johansson, Architect, Collingswood, NJ, explained that her company has 37 years experience in the business. They have worked on multi-family housing and affordable housing and tax credit projects. Have 35 completed projects in this region.

Their proposal is to pursue nomination of historic: NJ Register of Historic Places and National Historic Places. Keep window openings. Keep the two towers of the building. The existing corridors and stairs would be kept. Multi-purpose room would be saved. The windows would be kept from the gymnasium area.

They would leave the existing footprint, and propose an addition. The addition would be the entrance. There would be an elevator at the entrance. The twelve-unit addition would be off the new entrance. The addition would complement the existing building.

The Township Administrator, Richard Brook, asked why the addition would be necessary?

MEND stated they believed necessary to build the units. The historic preservation specialist said the gymnasium and stair wells cannot be chopped up.

Looking for a 9% tax credit transaction. The addition makes it more possible to obtain the credit.

The proposed project reviewed. All units would be one-bedroom units. The existing gymnasium would be used for a community room and social room. There would be lounges throughout the building.

The apartments discussed. Allocation of space is generous. All have a full kitchen with full size appliances. There will be a library and computer room. There will be a management unit.

Proposal has 5% (3 apartments) for handicapped, hearing and/or visually impaired.

The plan for people to be there for years and stay for years; to “age in place.”

Council Member Sean Ryan asked about the parking provided for the 48 one-bedroom apartments. The extra parking would be on street for visitors. They have found that affordable senior housing does not need a significant amount of parking areas; there should be sufficient parking with 26 parking spaces and on street parking.

MEND explained that they do not plan to have a live-in manager. There would be a live-in maintenance person.

Security planned for locks outside and inside doors. There would be some form of communication between the door and the residents. Telephone to telephone connection or intercom and buzzer. Could have a closed circuit television program.

Council Member Ryan questioned the design. Ms. Johansson explained that they are willing to work with the town.

John Hatch, AIA, partner at Clarke Caton Hintz (Mary Beth Lonergan's company) may be able to give assistance with the design since he is an expert in historic preservation.

Council Member Jerry Sandusky offered suggestions regarding parking with consideration to the other facilities there: the funeral home; bank; alley, etc.

Mary Beth Lonergan asked what MEND will do if they do not get the 9% tax credit?

Discussion of energy efficiency programs; their Lindenwold development will be watched for the savings in energy costs.

Ms. Lonergan asked about providing two bedroom units. The architect for MEND stated that some apartments could accommodate two bedrooms.

Regarding having special needs residents, MEND responded that they work with seniors, but Conifer has managed special needs housing. After discussion, stated that visually impaired residents would fit with the aging seniors group.

The 9% tax credit is offered for "frail" elderly. Social services organizations would provide needs.

MEND is looking at going beyond the 30 years. They plan the low and moderate housing forever.

FIVE MINUTE BREAK: 8:40 PM

Motion made, seconded and approved to hold a five-minute break at this time.

CIS (Community Investment Strategies)

A DVD overview presentation shown.

Proposed: 43 units with one for on-site manager; 49 parking spaces; there would be 35 one-bedroom units and eight two-bedroom units.

Their experience includes the Clare Estates in Bordentown City.

A current project is under construction in East Greenwich. Other areas discussed.

Christiana Foglio is the Project Manager. Ms. Foglio gave her background and experience in COAH as the past Chair. Also, past Director of Housing for the State of NJ.

The Project Director, Lopa Kolluri introduced. Their architect was represented by Jeremy Green.

Mr. Green discussed the historical structure of the Duffy school and the possible number of units proposed.

Discussion of the parking and how more is needed since the trend is now for “younger seniors” moving into these projects; they are still driving.

CIS’s proposal is to not keep the gymnasium. If keeping the gym, then the number of units would go down.

The existing elevator is off the back alley; mechanical equipment is there also; not planning on using. Would not want to discourage the disabled rather have access in the front of the building.

CIS is not looking for historic credits. They are looking at an energy efficient proposal; the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) eligible credits for the energy efficient proposal. They believe there are more points on the green check list. Hopefully maximize funding criteria.

CIS is a women-owned business.

Discussion of access and security; live in superintendent; access cards for entry.

Their programs include bus transportation for residents; activities; visits to food stores; doctors to visit and have wellness programs.

They design the building and with the town, work as a team. They want their project to be a part of the community.

Council Vice President Dennis O’Hara asked about the windows and the gymnasium. Various options reviewed.

Ms. Lonergan asked about the age restriction of 62+; that would be no problem. She also asked that since the town will donate the land, are they willing to go beyond the 30 to 45 years? Ms. Foglio stated that CSI would not want to say at this time that they would go beyond the 30 years for affordable housing.

Funding discussed and options.

Ms. Foglio stated that her company wants a long term relationship with the town; she lives in NJ and is in for the “long haul.” They are a small company; they try to take on only three projects a year.

Council Members asked if there was enough room out front of the building for the proposed ramp? Design challenges discussed. The presentation could be fine-tuned.

RPM Development

Alan Flood, Development Coordinator, represented RPM Development.

Mr. Flood explained that RPM always completes the projects they start. He stated that financing the COAH projects requires “being nimble” and working with the rules.

They are four time recipients of the Governor’s Award for Housing Excellence.

West Side Village completed in 1999; that project was much like the Duffy school.

Their Springfield Commons is “green” and has sustainable designs. There are solar panels at Springfield facility. Their Franklin Township project is the first LEED designed building. Focus on being LEED certified.

The Fairview Village project won the NJ Historic Preservation Award in 2008, that facility also has solar panels.

The Patriot Village in Trenton was an old factory that they converted into housing.

Glazar Architect has worked with RPM since 1991.

The plans were reviewed. Proposing 49 units with 33 parking spaces; all one-bedroom units. They are willing to try to work with some two-bedroom units. They believe the popular population would be 62 years old and over residents.

Mr. Flood stated that the specs for the proposal was a “good and organized proposal to start.”

Allen Flood is the Development Coordinator. He would be the contact person, attend meetings with Planning Board and obtain permits. Their company only does a few jobs a year. Their company wants to be involved with the community.

Brief discussion of the new Roberts Bill (A-500) and the requirement for 13% very low housing. RPM is prepared for that.

Discussion with Ms. Lonergan regarding the 9% housing tax credit; if not awarded the 9%, RPM would go for the 4% and new funding.

Tax Credit scoring in general suburban senior projects does not have priority. It is challenging for financing. The new housing bill gives additional tax credits.

Council Member Sean Ryan asked about the planned site security and community interaction. RPM responded that security would be by using a full time employee and a part time property manager. The front of the building will have cameras and security into a television and intercom. Residents will have card keys. All is computer recorded with the entry cards; video security.

RPM wants community interaction. They plan to host community meetings for the neighbors to be informed on what is happening.

Ms. Lonergan asked if willing to keep as affordable housing longer than the 45 years, since the town is donating the land? RPM responded that they would be willing to do that and to work with the town.

Comments

The Mayor and Members of Council discussed the four proposals and contractors with Mary Beth Lonergan, Special COAH Planner, Township Solicitor and Township Administrator.

Consensus from Mayor and Council that project should be restricted for 62+ years of age.

The MEND proposal kept the historic value of the Duffy School gymnasium. The proposed big addition is not favored.

CIS company is very knowledgeable of COAH and financing. Also, they are aware of the additional need for parking for their residents. Council would want additional information regarding the proposed ramp in front of the building; questions for the architect.

The COAH Planner, Mary Beth Lonergan; Township Administrator, Richard Brook and Township Solicitor, Bill Kearns, will meet with CIS and MEND and discuss some of the concerns: the ramp, the architect for CIS, the elevator, parking issues and the age restriction.

Lawsuit: Ordinances Prohibiting Public Intoxication

Township Solicitor Kearns informed the Mayor and Council of an anticipated lawsuit regarding the prohibiting of public intoxication. Several towns are named in the suit; it would be in everyone's best interest to coordinated efforts with JIF to respond to the suit.

Adjournment

11:15 PM Motion made by Sean Ryan to adjourn; seconded by Jerry Sandusky. Roll call vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

JOY M. WEILER, RMC/MMC
Township Clerk