



Diversity Task Force
Town Hall
173 Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450
selectboard@grotonma.gov

Raquel Majeski, Chair
Michelle Collette, Vice Chair
Gordon Candow
Amy Degen
Susan Hughes
Bhaskar Gupta Karpurapu
Deirdre Slavin Mitchell
James Moore
Fran Stanley

Diversity Task Force
Thursday, April 28, 2022
Virtual meeting via ZOOM

MINUTES

Chair Raquel Majeski called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM by roll call of members in attendance.

Members present: Raquel Majeski, Michelle Collette, Deirdre Slavin Mitchell, Fran Stanley, Gordon Candow, Bhaskar Gupta Karpurapu, Susan Hughes, and James Moore

Members absent: Amy Degen

Housing update

Member Fran Stanley provided the following update on the redevelopment of the Deluxe property and emailed the information to the committee.

John Amaral, founding member of Omni Properties LLC and Groton resident, briefed the Select Board on April 25, 2022. Omni Properties purchased the former Deluxe property at 500 Main Street in September 2021. Amaral addressed the Select Board and stressed that he is sharing current plans, but these plans are subject to change. Amaral said that his team had their first preliminary meeting with MassHousing regarding their plans to submit a MGL Ch. 40B comprehensive permit application. The plan is to build two hundred (200) units of rental housing. Fifty (50) units or twenty-five percent (25%) of the total project will be affordable for households earning up to eighty percent (80%) of the Area Median Income.

Chapter 40B Process

Groton may expect to receive a copy of the permit application within the next two and a half weeks. MassHousing will schedule a site walk and allow the Town thirty (30) days to submit comments on the application. MassHousing will need at least sixty (60) days to make a decision on the proposed project.

John Amaral said that his team has prepared a detailed application and even more information will be provided with the Zoning Board of Appeals application. The upfront preparation is expected to speed up the Commonwealth's project eligibility review.

If MassHousing does issue a project eligibility letter, then Omni Properties will be able to file their comprehensive permit application with the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA will have six months to review the application, taking input from the public and other town departments and committees.

Affordability

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) guidelines allow all rental units to count on a municipality's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) if at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the units are affordable to income eligible households earning up to eighty percent (80%) AMI. [See Comprehensive Permit Guidelines Unit Eligibility Criteria II-4 A.2.b (1) and 760 CMR 56.03(2)(a)]. For this reason, all 200 rental units will count on Groton's SHI if the project proceeds as planned.

Groton has 224 units on the SHI now and an additional 200 would yield 424 total units. DHCD has not yet assigned the new 2020 Census number of total year-round housing units for Groton. The new number may be around 4,150. So, the redevelopment of the Deluxe property will allow Groton to reach its goal of ten percent (10%) affordable housing. Groton will gain new construction rental units for market rate and affordable households.

Chapter 40B requires a use restriction of thirty (30) years for newly created affordable units. [See Comprehensive Permit Guidelines Unit Eligibility Criteria II-4 A.1.e (1)].

Project Description

- Current proposal is all housing for now. Possibility of 2 or 3 commercial units later.
- 200 total units, all rental with 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units.
- 168 units will be in 3 apartment buildings and 32 units will be in townhomes.
- Each apartment building will be a 4-story midrise building with 56 units.
- No underground parking and planning for 1.8 parking spaces per unit.
- Each of the 8 townhomes will contain 4 units each.
- Apartment buildings will be at the rear of the site and townhomes will also be set back from Main St.
- Current curb cut and driveway will be used. Will propose westbound slip lane to Mass Highway.
- Traffic engineer opined that area traffic is not sufficient to qualify for a traffic light.
- Will request 2 crosswalks with blinking caution lights for residents to access Mill Run Plaza.
- Clubhouse, pool, dog park, sidewalks throughout, drainage pond will become a feature.
- Deluxe buildings will be demolished.
- Redevelopment will result in less impervious space and will pull a lot of previously disturbed area outside of the 100' wetlands buffer.
- There will be a MEPA filing but not an Environmental Notification Form (ENF).

- Adequate sewer capacity anticipated this site may require 55,000 gallons (about 208197.55 L) per day and the total capacity is estimated at 80 to 90,000 gallons (about 340686.9 L) per day.
- School impact. While not an allowed criterion for the 40B application, Amaral explained that for a similarly sized Village Green development in Littleton, there were .22 children (per unit?). Applying that estimate to this project, there may be 40 children in this development, or approximately 3.5 children per grade.
- Team is using Dillis & Roy as civil engineers, Bayside Engineering for traffic engineering, and Oxbow Associates as environmental consultants. May use Lincoln Properties for initial lease up.

MBTA Communities Zoning

John Amaral is open to the 500 Main Street site being included in an MBTA Communities if it is in the form of an overlay. Amaral said that his team is not interested in building more densely than 200 housing units for this site. In his opinion, greater density on their 38.5-acre parcel would not make sense financially. Amaral added that the delay of waiting for MBTA Communities zoning to materialize, including the wait for DHCD to issue final guidelines, does not fit his team's timeline.

Next Steps

John Amaral expressed an interest in meeting with the Affordable Housing Trust, the Housing Partnership and the Groton Housing Authority. He would also like to meeting with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

What is 80% AMI

The current area median income in the Lowell Metropolitan Area for a 4-person household is \$126,500. The 80% income limits by household size are: \$62,500 for a one-person household, \$71,550 for a two-person household, \$80,500 for a three-person household and \$89,400 for a four-person household. Income limits are calculated by HUD annually (See [HUD Income Limits.](#))

Member Michelle stated this is wonderful news

Member James asked does it matter how much rent is for a unit to be considered affordable?

Fran stated that the tenant must have a certain amount of income and their rent will be held to something that can be affordable

Member Gordon asked did he indicated a date/timeline?

Fran stated the following:

Timeline: closing is the end of summer early fall and they have started the applications with Mass Housing. The thinking is that it will take 2 weeks for approval Mass Housing will always err in the favor of allowing the developer a shot.

8 months they may have permits

Michelle – it will be important for the DTF (Diversity Task Force) to review the materials and be an advocate for the project because it advances our affordable housing goals

Deirdre – they must remove the physical building this summer that includes some asbestos work and there are a couple of different needs there

James – I am wondering if people have transportation, if they need it especially if they need to get food?

Fran – 80% is not aimed in the various lower incomes that you may be thinking of. Households of one would need to earn \$62,500. Folks prioritize car ownership.

Deirdre: These are our teachers, police, hardworking people

Bhaskar – What are the commercial units? Could they be used for shopping. Is the school system not meant for these numbers of additional people?

Fran – he did a similar sized project in Littleton, and they only had .22 kids/ apartment. They may only have 3.5 per grade added as a part of the Groton school system. There are often fewer children for affordable housing.

Juneteenth Celebration

Michelle

Owen Shuman and the Library have a musical program scheduled for June 21st Kevin Haynes and I know that the historical society that is having a program on Juneteenth on the role of George Boutwell and his antislavery advocacy throughout his life and role in the reconstruction period and there are other programs that are included in the area We want to make sure that we are coordinating with one another

Susan

Annette Gordon – Reed author of On Juneteenth \$20K to speak virtual \$9k virtual

Town Read on her book educates us and want to do an event but Beth is still interested if we wanted to do a town read

I would live to see it a DTF page resource

Fran – I think it is a good idea and it sounds like the way that it grows is to include it as a child friendly event

Deirdre – my thought I am not sure if it fits within the charge

James - I love the idea of engaging and educating I like the idea of the public offering of the book that we should read. I am not sure if it is engaging for everyone more ways to engage as well

Michelle – Beth is working on a program for children. I will read the book because it sounds informative

Fran – I like history and I am interested in it. There are so many people where history will never be interesting. There is a lack of knowledge and people need awareness, and you may find curiosity that you didn't know we had

James – my first thought is food and it is cultural and a great way to introduce people to culture and music that brings people together

Susan – if we don't sponsor book reading but we can use some of our town's funds to buy books and coordinate some food events

James – I want to make sure that I am emphasizing giving choice

Susan – do you know if this is something the town will celebrate and give a holiday

Deirdre – As someone who creates events all the time and to close to plan something significant maybe we can do writing from the paper and give a quote and explaining the holiday

Fran – I think that it could be helpful for us to attend the Chelmsford events, etc

James – I agree with Deridre, and I would love to make it a celebration that we can be proud of and will be as good as it deserves to be I would be glad to do something for the paper

Michelle – participating in Chelmsford's event as we are invited to do in whatever way is manageable

We can say DTF has acquired 20 copies of the books and make them available at town hall

Motion:

- LA gift fund DEI gift fund request 50 books for the least amount not to exceed \$15.99 to be given out free to the public after we write an article about the Juneteenth celebration.
 - Second Michelle
 - Voted unanimously

Minutes by Raquel Majeski.

Next Meeting: May 19th