

**Housing Committee
Town of Pelham, MA**

Meeting Minutes: October 22, 2019

Committee Members in Attendance:

Tilman Lukas
Jim Lumley
Ruth Elcan
Barbara Cooper
Amy Spalding-Fecher
Gail Kenny

APPROVED: 

Absent:

Guests in Attendance:

Tom Kegelmann- Home City Development, Inc. (HCD)
Peter Serafino- Home City Development, Inc.
Elaine Vega- Housing Management Resources
Jodi Smith- Housing Management Resources

Public in Attendance (spelling and list not be accurate or complete)

William Sherr	John Hondrogen
Al Hudson	Bill Pula
Judy Hudson	Eric Castenson
Charles Weeber	Wendy Larson
Steven Bommer	Jeff Eiseman
Stacey McCullough	Matt Wolaver
Bruce Klotz	Stan Swiercz
Debra Scoon	Lisa Lukas
Michael Weinberg	Daniel Robb
Ashley Keiser	Leslie Laurie
Charles Thompson	Judy Eiseman
Peter Wilson	Lexi Dewey

Action Items

- Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Committee Discussion Topics (Note: best efforts were made to capture all information, questions and answers, and to attribute them to the correct people. These minutes attempt to, but do not suggest that statements, questions and answers totally accurately reflect those made by the people in attendance.)

Tilman opened the meeting, welcomed everyone attending. Introduced the Housing Committee and then the Developer's team.

He then asked Barbara to give a brief presentation regarding the findings of Housing Needs study performed in 2014.

- Chapter 40B was created in 1969 with a goal that every community should have at least 10% of their units as affordable to individuals and families earning less than 80% of the area median income.
- In 2000 Chapter 44B created the Community Preservation Act (CPA) which, if a town adopts, allows for a real estate tax surcharge to assist in developing affordable housing.
- In 2011 Pelham approved the CPA and formed the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).
- In 2013 the CPC commissioned a Housing Needs Study.
- The 2014 Housing Needs Study identified strategies based on demographics and affordability with the conclusion that:
 1. Need to expand affordable homeownership
 2. Modify zoning and land use regulations
 3. Increase community awareness of housing need
 4. Develop a land inventory
- Highlights of the Housing Needs Study:
 1. 10% of housing needs to be affordable, Pelham has 0.7%
 2. Owner occupancy rate is 84%. Mostly single-family houses which are expensive
 3. Too few rental options for young, elderly, and families in transition
 4. Affordable housing also known as "workforce housing". Most town employees meet requirements for affordability.
 5. Households with children decreased 25%.
 6. In 2010 45% of population is 55 or older, and aging. 008-2012
 7. From 2008-2012 statistics, the Pelham resident mortgage cost burden rate is 43%, highest in Hampden County.

Tilman then asked Amy to give a brief overview of the Land Inventory and Assessment.

- Per the Housing Needs Study, the Housing Committee commissioned the Land Inventory Assessment to identify developable land in Pelham.
- Exhaustive methodology looking at a number of data points, assessments, surveys, as well as discussions with committees and boards involved in overseeing development in town.
- Conclusion: only 8% of land in Pelham is developable.
- Very little land suitable for higher density development except in Village Center zoning district.
- Summary recommends seeking out affordable housing developers.

Tilman then read a letter of support from Select Board Vice Chair Bob Agoglia.

October 22, 2019

I am sorry that I am unable to attend tonight's meeting but I wish to express my personal support for the affordable housing project under discussion. I am deeply

grateful to Tilman Lukas for his tireless leadership along with all of the members of our housing committee. I also want to recognize our Planning Board for their extensive work in creating village center zoning for our town. It is because of the leadership and hard work of these two bodies that this project is before us.

I have been personally involved with other people in our town advocating for affordable housing, first as a member of a long-range planning committee in the 90s, and then as a member of the Planning Board in the early 2000s.

I have some understanding about what it takes to make an affordable housing project work. The complexities and limitations of financing such a project, which I'm sure will be explained tonight, require that they be reasonably large scale. Given this reality I believe the site, despite its various challenges, is appealing because of the way it minimizes the visual impact of the building and parking area. I believe that the developer, Home City Development Corp, sincerely wants to work with us and be responsive to our concerns and ideas. They are committed to protecting the environment and designing a building that is energy efficient, aesthetically pleasing and comfortable to live in. I can't think of a better developer to work with.

This is an exciting and realistic chance to create affordable housing in our town. We all know how expensive housing is in our area. While perhaps not perfect for everyone who needs affordable housing, this is Pelham's opportunity to make it possible for a significant number of people to afford to live in our beautiful town. I am personally committed to doing whatever I can to make this project a reality.

Bob Agoglia
Vice Chair
Pelham Select Board

Tilman then asked Tom Kegelman and Peter Serafino to make a brief presentation of the proposed Amethyst Brook Apartments rental project.

Peter Serafino projected a draft site plan on the television monitor for the audience to see. He also handed out copies. Peter then described the project as it currently is envisioned but emphasized that this is a draft and subject to change some.

- Home City Development, Inc. (HCD) has acquired 18-20 and 22 Amherst Road.
- Overall site is approx. 9.5 acres.
- Have engaged architect and engineers to begin design of units and site.
- Driveway has been relocated and configured to minimize slope.
- Fly Rod building to be demolished along with all structures at 22 Amherst Road. Will be replaced with new structure with approx. 28 units and community space.
- 18 Amherst Road house will be sold. 20 Amherst Road (approx. 5,500 sq. ft. building) will be rehabilitated into 6 units. Attached barn, due to deteriorated condition, will be demolished.
- Total project will be 34 units: 24-1 BR, 7-2 Br, 3-3 BR.

- On-site parking for 49 cars.
- All structures will be connected to town water and sewer.
- Units will be affordable for those with incomes at 60% of area median income or less. AMI at 60% for family of 4 is approx. \$53,000.
- Occupants will be chosen by lottery.
- Development still in the informal discussion phase. More formal permitting will start in about a month. This will include request for project eligibility letter from the Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This will allow submission of 40B application to ZBA, public comment, and submission of application to all relevant town boards.

Tilman then opened the meeting to questions by attendees.

Q (Tilman): Why did you relocate the driveway? **A (Tom K):** Grade of existing driveway too steep for pedestrians and vehicles. Change from 11% to 5% grade.

Q (Tilman): Why are you demolishing the barn? **A (Tom K):** Looks great from outside but inside falling apart. Too expensive to renovate.

Q (Judy H): Who is your clientele? If you are talking about families, why are there so many 1 Br. Apartments? **A (Tom K):** Looking at assessments, we believe there is a high need for 1 & 2 bedroom apartments, but at the same time we don't want to discriminate against families. Government housing agency (DHCD) would prefer 4- 3 Br apartments. Plan skews towards lower number of bedrooms. Couples and singles occupying most of the units.

Q (Debra S): What are the size of the units? **A (Peter S):** 1 BR approx. 650-750 sf. At Peterson property (20 Amherst Rd) units will be slightly larger.

Q (Leslie L): Will this be open to students? **A (Elaine V):** Federal LIHTC program does not allow students in this type of housing. Currently there is no plan for market rate housing that would be available to anyone.

Q (Steve B): Are you keeping in mind children with regard to square footage that could be living there to fill our school system? **A (Tom K):** Can't say how many children will be living there. **A (Tilman):** Currently there are 20 school choice vacancies at the elementary school. This means a loss of \$100,000 to the town.

Q (Lexi D): Wouldn't it follow to have more 3 BR families to help with the school?

A (Tom K): This is all stuff we can work with. We are looking at more than just the town's budget, demand, marketability. We can't build on larger footprint because we are in area strictly controlled next to river.

Q (Judy E): What would be a market rate? **A (Tom K):** 1 Br could get \$1,300-

\$1,500/month. **A (Tilman):** Units in Amherst are marketed at \$2,800 for a 2 bedroom.

A (Ruth E): When we started planning, we were focused towards elderly housing from the HNS, very much on our minds.

Q (Stacy M): Amethyst Brook-how are you thinking about preserving access, habitat for wildlife? **A (Tom K):** Trees in path of driveway will be taken down, otherwise very little disturbance as we are not allowed to disturb more than existing building. There is currently a path connecting to Amethyst Brook and Conservation areas. Plan is to make it more accessible. Future meeting with Kestrel to look at access.

Q (Stacy M): Cut other trees? **A (Tom K):** Petersen residence will have more clearing to remove trees.

Q (John H): Is this appropriate for seniors? Will all units be accessible? **A (Tom K):** All units in the lower building will be adaptable, building is wheelchair accessible from street and there is an elevator in the building. All first-floor apartments will be visible. All units in the lower building will be adaptable. Some of the Petersen units will not be accessible.

Q (John H): How much higher is the new building than the current? **A (Peter S):** Don't know, probably only a few feet higher than current.

Q (John H?): Will it address the Village requirements for looking like a traditional building? Concern about disregarding Pelham environment. **A (Tom K):** Interesting question. Starting to address idea of what might fit? Currently styles present are colonial, farm house, factory-which is the design you want to refer to? (straw vote taken to see who would want traditional clapboard, who would want factory-Mostly traditional votes). We are challenging the architect to come up with ideas (we are not there yet with architect), what siding and how it fits with surrounding area.

Q (Judy E): Planning board spent a lot of time on design styles. Have you considered the fact that you will need to be concerned about power outage with sewer being pumped up? **A (Tom K):** Yes, entire building will have a back-up generator-for elevator as well.

Q (Read by Tilman from note given by someone who's name was not recorded: Concern about more cars added to traffic on Amherst Road. **A (Peter S):** At some point we will do a traffic study. Talking about 34 apartments, familiar with traffic studies and science behind it. Will get to it in due time. **Q:** How is drainage being dealt with? **A (Tom K):** Drainage will comply with all state standards. Will assess storm water management in time. We will improve over current situation. **Q:** Will these be rental properties, who is the manager? **A (Elaine):** HMR is the property manager. Property will be owned by a for-profit entity and will be taxed with restrictions based on affordability considered in the mix. HMR manages properties in 13 states, almost 10,000 apartments. We have a mission-we want this to be a good community that people will want to live in. Been doing this for a long time. Agencies love us. Tenants love us. **A (Peter S):** Our mission is to build high quality affordable housing and then own it and be part of the community for a long time.

Statement (Jeff E): Notes that the previous question was less about the number of cars but rather the danger of the intersection, curve in the road. **A (Tom K):** Town has a

significant challenge in developing town center with fast moving traffic coming through town. Calming traffic on the road is going to be an important issue for everyone.

Statement (Michael W): I am an abutter. Thank you, Tom, Peter, and Tilman, for their consultation with me. Concern is a safety issue about traffic barreling down the road. I know what it is, especially dump trucks. Getting out of my driveway is a challenge. The newly positioned driveway is better than the existing. Don't have much line of sight coming down the hill. Not an easy issue to fix, worry about seniors, slow reflexes.

A (Tom K): There are ways of calming traffic, it costs money, but there are ways to manage speed on that road that will benefit town, this development, kids at the school.

Q (Michael W): Where do the school buses go? **A(Tom K):** Driveway will be able to accommodate fire trucks and buses.

Q (Judy E): Design Manual for state highway. Will state have to approve driveway cut?

A (Tom K): No, this is a town road and other than speed district State has no jurisdiction. **Comment (Judy E):** Money! This is not going to be cheap; this is happening very quickly. Orient Springs property just came on the market, could be possible for development.

Q (Eric H): I second traffic concern. You say there are handicapped units, but only 2 HC parking spaces shown on plan. **A (Tom K):** We are working on the details of the parking.

Q (Eric H): Where do the buses turn around, where would the bus stop be? **A (Tom K):** Designed so hook and ladder truck can go down and turn around. Probably suitable for bus as well.

Q (Eric H): If we have to pay for expenses for traffic calming? **A (Tom K):** Bringing it up because it has come up. Many towns take advantage of the opportunity to attract attention of State to create some opportunities-Complete Streets project up to \$400,000 to do this, plus Safe Routes to School, +\$100,000. First step is to engage a PVPC traffic consultant to work with the town, after request issued by Select Board. Don't know how much HCDC can help with this. The sidewalk on our property could be covered by this project. If the town is interested in traffic mitigation and sources of funding, we will cooperate.

Comment (Tilman): I've been involved in town matters since for about 30 years. Town has discussed the traffic problem on Amherst Road and nauseum. This is a town-wide problem. Zoning Board has looked at it. This project could be a catalyst to get the State involved. First step in getting to where we need to go.

Q (Debby S): Traffic light, sidewalk, crosswalk. What is the objection to sidewalk?

A (Barbara C): We've been talking about this for a long time. Sewer was a problem at first, rezoning was a problem. Town enforcement could be improved. These won't be easily solved.

Q (Michael W): Complex will generate trash, sewage, requires pumps, collect and store trash. **A (Tom K):** Dumpster location not on plan, but will be on site. There will be a pump with back-up generator.

Q (Stan S): We are interested in efficiency of building envelope and HVAC. **A (Tom K):** Goal is to attempt to reach Passive House standards. We'll install as much solar as we can get (Photo voltaic), it makes sense, we will use electricity for heating needs (air source heat pump).

Q (Amy F): Do you need to consider 100-year flood plain? **A (Tilman):** Project is within the inner riparian zone. Previously developed properties (factories) must comply with the Wetlands Protection Act which allows work within a previously disturbed area footprint. Storm water management is a big issue and needs to consider climate change projections.

Q (Steve B): Given stormwater management, what are options? **A (Tom K):** There are ways of treating storm water before it goes into the stream. Runoff will be that same as existing. Underground treatment filtering detention basin planned (expensive). Will be working with the Conservation Commission.

Q (Bill P): Stormwater looks like a problem. This will not be exempt from taxes? What is your ballpark cost? **A (Tom K):** \$10 million.

Comment (Bill P): Some portion will be tax revenue. It is a 40B which overrides our own zoning, but you are being cooperative.

General Questions around stormwater: **A (Tom K):** I defer to the engineers to figure it out. I am impressed with the Conservation Commission with their due-diligence.

Q (Leslie L): Why are you interested in such a small and complicated project?

A (Tilman): When the Housing Committee started looking at possibilities, the trailer park seemed like a good prospect, but there seemed to have been a sweetheart deal involved with the site. When the HDR property became available I contacted different developers. Wayfinders, Valley CDC, O'Connell Development, all said the project was too small. Home City Housing seemed interested. **A (Peter S):** This is the kind of project we typically do. Probably one of the most difficult projects we have done. **A (Tom K):** I am on the Amherst Affordable Housing Development Trust. Very challenging to work in suburban communities. What happens in places like Springfield metro, de facto you have economic segregation going on. Concentrating poverty in inner cities (Springfield) creates economic, racial inequality. This is an important project. Plus, we were invited. PS, there are no easy sites.

Q (William S): Concerned about traffic, sidewalks, lighting. Refer to Treehouse in Easthampton that partner elderly with foster care. Have you thought about this?

A (Tom K): We have not looked at pairing elderly with children, something we can explore. **A (Elaine V):** We can make this a preference in the housing lottery.

Q (Ruth E): We were told early on that there would be no effort to bring children.

A (Tom K): We have looked more at the site and are looking at possible playground areas.

Q (unknown): Suggests reconsidering bedroom distribution. Most families are attracted to places where there are other young families. Would like to see more of a 50-50 split. **A (Tom K):** We want to create a mix where people feel comfortable. Marketability of current location is excellent. We will fill the units very quickly.

Q (Gail K): Could design allow for flexibility of unit size? Change at a later date?

A (Tom K): Project controlled by very stringent guidelines which are very rigid. (Shows Closing Binders from another project). There are many, many hoops that they must jump through and compliance requirements. Changes would make departure from what was agreed to very difficult. **A (Elaine V):** Very limited flexibility, even Treehouse set up might be difficult to duplicate today. Local preference could be advocated (70% local preference). We have had working family preference, physical disabilities preference, local residence preference. Think about what preferences you want.

Q (unknown): What preferences do you see? **A (Elaine V):** Elderly in Pelham, children of local people who are starting out in workforce who can't afford to live here otherwise.

Q (Judy E): I tend to be the devil's advocate, although I support this project. Although traffic has been a town problem, town officials have been turned away from state funding because not a high priority for the State. Is there a way HCDC can help us with this? Cart before the horse-may be a catalyst for change? You are asking this site to do a lot. DEP hopes for improvement to the site. **A (Tom K):** Can't be any worse than it is now. There is no easy project, this comes with a lot of challenges. We put our best into it. There is a reason why you are not being smothered by developers coming into town because it is difficult. We have put over \$1 million into this already. We have never abandoned a project. Challenges are not small, but there are opportunities as well.

Q (Pete W): Can we have a straw pole as to how many people want this? **A (Tilman):** This is not the venue for a straw pole. We would be sending a message to the State that we are not interested in affordable housing.

Comment (Pete W): Is there any affordable housing in Pelham. Maybe nobody wants it. Maybe Pelham isn't affordable.

Comment (Steve B): I appreciate your company being involved.

Q (John H): What is your timeline for starting? **A (Tom K):** 2 years. 40B at best next summer, then we start applying for affordable housing credits at the end of 2020. Award in July of 2021, with ground breaking in spring of 2022 at best.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tilman Lukas