Town of Dunstable Board of Selectmen
Public Meeting with Brattle Development
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 20, 2023, 6:00pm

In attendance: Chairman Ron Mikol, Vice Chair Leah Basbanes, Selectman Kieran Meehan, Town Administrator Jason Silva, Executive Assistant Sue Fayne, and the Brattle Development team: Jesse D. Schomer, Jim Tully, Matt McGovern, David Kelly, and Daniel Skolski.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mikol at 6pm.

Chairman Mikol began the meeting explaining the purpose to the public: to give Brattle Development an opportunity to present an overview of their 40B LIP Development Proposal at 41 Lowell St to the public and allow the public the opportunity to ask questions and share feedback.

After a brief introduction by Chairman Mikol, Mr. Shomer began by reviewing the presentation, The Villages at Brattle Farms - December 20, 2023. This presentation can be found on the Town Website here: https://www.dunstable-ma.gov/41lowellstreet.

Mr. Shomer started by reviewing the Project Team members:
Ownership: James Tully & Matthew McGovern
Legal: Jesse D. Schomer, Esq. -Regnante Sterio
Architecture: Daniel M. Skolski, AIA –DMS design, llc
Landscape: Hawk Design, Inc.
Site/Civil: David Kelly –Kelly Engineering
Group Traffic: MDM Transportation Consultants, Inc.
Financial: Bob Engler –SEB, LLC
Fiscal Impacts: FougerePlanning + Development

Mr. Shomer provided the public with a general outline of the project:

- The plan is for 156 total dwelling units (32 Townhouse Style Condo Units, 12 duplex, 8 single family), and 124 garden style condominiums. Larger, higher density development will be at the back of the property and not visible from main roadways.
- 356 total parking spaces (>2 per unit)
- Common clubhouse with town coordinated senior access.
- Walking trails
- Open space for conservation at the back of the site, wetlands
- Adjacent DPW-appropriate property
- Site identified on 2016 Housing Production Plan as a developable site for affordable housing (pp. 54-55)
- This would be an age-restricted, 55+ community where 25% would be affordable units, defined as 80% of AMI. There would be 39 units designated as affordable.
- There is a very low number of school aged children expected based on 55+ community designation. The current estimate is 5 school aged children.

Mr. Shomer then reviewed their assessment of the affordability needs in the town:

- Town of Dunstable currently does not have any affordable housing per the requirements outlined under Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws.
- In March 2016 the Dunstable Affordable Housing Committee issued a Housing Production Plan that recommended 75-135 new affordable housing units.
- This site at 41 Lowell Street was one of five recommended sites to embark upon an affordable housing development.
- Non age restricted affordable developments will add further financial burden on the Town. Each student adds education costs to town of Dunstable. A large-scale affordable development without age limits will adversely impact the town's projected operating budget deficit.
- The Town's aging population needs this development to offer homes within town as seniors choose to migrate from larger homes.
- This location is the perfect site to build a high-density project:
    - It's a previously developed gravel pit with perfect soils
    - Its largely hidden behind other houses and wooded areas to limit the general view of any travelers passing by.
    - It's perfectly located on the end of town to allow for easy access to Route 3 without adding traffic through the center of town.
    - The site is large enough to make a large inroad to delivering the affordable housing for Dunstable in one project vs several different projects scattered around town

Mr. Shomer states that the fiscal impact to the town - gross revenues of $1,655,860 minus municipal costs $491,180 -leaves a net positive annual fiscal impact of $1,164,680.00.

Lowell Street project is appropriately located to utilize the new water system. This project would add about 150 users and generate over $400,000 in Water Department revenue. The current average water usage bill is $2,732 per user and adding another 150 users and $400,000 in water usage will defray the heavy infrastructure costs over more users. This project will reduce the average users water bill by about half to approximately $1,400 per user.

Mr. Shomer wrapped up his presentation by reviewing the project benefits as defined by Brattle Development:

- New Water Department customers (150% increase over existing customer base)
- Potential DPW property
- Town coordinated senior access to clubhouse
- Walking trails
- Conservation land
- Construction and other jobs
- 55+ Benefits
- Housing option for local seniors
- Minimal school impact
- Less commuter traffic

Dan Skolski then reviewed the site layout, architecture, the different unit designs, the arial view, with the overall theme of the development being barn/farmhouse style in keeping with the theme of the Town/concept. There would be minimal visual impact as you drive by, as the plan is to bring in lots of trees and landscaping. They are proposing to turn over the barn/garage to the Town for a DPW facility.

The clubhouse is designed with a barn, gable roof, inground pool, and parking. They envision a "town green" with duplex units surrounding it and 1/3 of the parking spaces will be covered. Single family homes would surround the pond. The majority of living space is designed to be on one floor. 95% of the units will be ADA compatible. Overall, the site will be well-vegetated and set back.

Mr. Kelly then reviewed the layout and an early review of the engineering plans but reiterated that they are at the very early stages of the engineering design. The total site is about 77 acres, 33 acres of which would be permanent open space. There could be some passive uses, but it would be undisturbed land. There will be a passive recreation area with usable open space and 10-11 acres will be developed. The property is being fully surveyed, with a full topographic survey. From Mr. Kelly's perspective, this is an easy site to develop. It's a flat space, there will be no impacts to wetlands. There is a flood plain on the property but it's in the pond itself. With a development consisting of 330 bedrooms plus or minus, onsite sewage will be designed and permitted through the groundwater discharge permit. The soils are good so Mr. Kelly doesn't anticipate any issues at this time. There will be a Storm Water Management design. Mr. Kelly wrapped things up by stating that the site can handle what is being proposed. It may seem like a large development, but in their world they can easily accommodate what is being asked. Storm water management design will be completed.

To wrap up the Brattle presentations, owner Matt McGovern spoke briefly about the benefits to the Town: revenue from the Water System, a $70 million investment in the property that's fully taxable. He shared that as someone who grew up and went to schools in Town, he would have the best interest for the Town in mind. Mr. McGovern stated that he's proud of what they are planning for the Town, this is a great commuter location, and the Homeowner's Association will keep it a top of the line development. After the representatives of Brattle Development reviewed their presentation, residents then asked a series of questions to the team.

At this point Mr. Mikol opened the floor for public comments or questions. Residents are identified when they announced their names.

- A resident commented that the proposed DPW garage is in a residentially zoned area so it can't exist there. Vice Chair Basbanes clarified that if it's a Town-owned building, zoning doesn't come into play.
- How many years will the project take to complete? 2 years, it would be a phased build out per Matt McGovern.
- The same resident is concerned about the noise during the construction and mentioned that it's noisy today. Brattle will take that feedback back.

Carol Bacon had a series of questions as a representative of the Affordable Housing Committee:

- How many fully accessible units - 5%
- Will any be designated for veterans - no.
- Will buildings have fire suppression? Yes.
- In the plan it shows one elevator and 2 stair cases per floor for the 3-story buildings. Carol shared concerns during an evacuation where elevators can't be used and recommends more staircases.
- How big are the buildings? He believes about 180 feet.
- Will there be management onsite? yes

- Regarding the community room/space - the open meeting space is 900 square feet. Would you consider a larger space? Designed to hold 50-60 people for birthday, anniversary, family reunion type events.
- Public pool - Who will take care of the lifeguard? Since it's private property/private amenity space there is no lifeguard required.

- An abutter asked, when you do construction, what are you going to do to minimize the noise and the dirt, etc.? Brattle answered that typically they will put up fencing and will work with the town on the days/hours of when work can be done.
- After it's done, will it be fenced off? That's a TBD.

- How far are the houses away from the property line? 20-50 feet from other properties.

- Comment from resident: This would be a 24% population growth. With the number of parking spaces you have, it doesn't seem that you're planning on a single person in these units. Feels as though the estimates on project impacts are too low. Also, if a senior sells their home to move into this development, they are likely going to sell to a family with children.
- Flooding witnessed many times in the area. Stormwater system has to be designed so that there will not be increased runoff into the property.

- Alan Chaney, abutter. Mr. Chaney disagrees that there will only be 5 children in the development, with Swallow Union being the number 5 elementary school in the state. He'd like to hear more details about the traffic plan and specifically around the intersection of Lowell and Main Streets

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- How long are the buildings? Anne Davis said that she measured it to scale, and it came out to 370 feet.

- Are there statistics/data on the assumption of 5 children for a 55+ community? Yes.

- Jeff Rosen - National Grid is in the process of replacing wooden poles and they are replacing every 2 or 3 poles. He'd suggest having them replace all the wooden poles adjacent to the property.
- Would the developers consider putting in a commercial kitchen to be able to handle meal prep for seniors, etc.? The plan is for a "warming kitchen."

- Are the units regular apartments or condos? They will all be condos.

- Any concerns with doubling the water usage, along with the impact of water volume associated with the PFAS project? There is plenty of water to support both projects.

- Rob Rafferty, Advisory Board: Can we get a general timeline of the project? What are some of the next steps in the project. Mr. Shomer reviewed these bullets, and estimated that they are approximately 2 years out from securing all permits.
    1. Step 1 -Local Initiative: The Town of Dunstable has outlined a 60-day process for local review and feedback. The desired result of this process is a Town letter of support for the Project.

2. Step 2 -State Review of Project Eligibility: If the Town decides to support the project, an application for a Project Eligibility Letter (PEL) is filed with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to confirm that the Project is eligible to proceed under the Local Initiative Program (LIP).
3. Step 3 -Local ZBA Project Review: Following the receipt of a PEL, the developer files an application with the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for a Comprehensive Permit approving the Project under all local bylaws. The ZBA has 180 days to review the project.
4. Step 4 -State/Federal Review: Separate applications are required for all applicable state and federal permits (e.g., wetlands Order of Conditions).

- How is this project approved? Is there a town vote? No, the Board of Selectmen would approve.

- How many people do we expect to reside in this development. The estimate is on the high end 300 people, low end 150-160.

- DWP garage - the Town said no to it a few years ago, why do we want it now? There haven't been any agreements, this is still a concept discussion.

- Anne Davis, Chair of Historical Commission. Residents appreciate Dunstable for its rural character. She has serious concerns that the 156 dwelling units and parking spaces will be highly visible from East Main St. She asked how 3 football field-length buildings could not be seen from the street? She shared concerns that if the development is built in the fashion that it's presented today, it will trigger a Section 103 review from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Anne is going to follow up on that. Anne then read the summary from the National Register Nomination for East Main Street.

- If the 55+ person passes away, can the people left behind stay in the property? To be determined - that would be an HOA decision.

- What happens if it's an unfriendly 40B? The developer engages directly with the State and the town doesn't have an opportunity to participate in the planning process.

- Concerns were shared about the 3 "barracks" condo buildings being too large.

- Marcia Walsh asked, do we have fire equipment to support the 3 story buildings? Yes, with our Intermunicipal Agreement, both Tyngsboro and Pepperell have ladder trucks that can reach.
- DPW Garage - will that be a gift or selling to the town? That is still to be determined

- What's the difference between this project and what is going on behind the post office? The MUD District, 40B development is on Town owned land, which is being leased by MCO, the developer. The project at 41 Lowell St. is private land and a private developer.

- How long does Brattle stay connected to the project once it's completed? Typically, the HOA takes over, a board is elected, and then the developer steps back.

- Would we sell the current DPW property if we take ownership of the garage at Brattle for DPW? It's something that we would consider.

- What's the pricing going to be on the units? Market Price.

Anne Davis handed out copies of 55+ housing that has smaller sized buildings that matches the feel of the town.

- Would they consider reducing the size of the buildings? They've received a lot of feedback that we will take back and discuss.

- Suggestion to fly a balloon to be able to see how high the buildings sit from a distance.

- Jean Phalen suggests the developer consider moving the apartment building a little bit away from the high-tension lines both for health reasons and aesthetic.

- Jon Crandall shared his support for the project.

- A resident shared feedback that the cost of water today is a huge issue and he'd be happy to see a reduction in the water bills.

Once all questions were answered, on a **motion** made by Chairman Mikol and **seconded** by Selectman Meehan, the meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm. **The vote was unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Fayne
Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator
and Board of Selectmen