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By Amie Martin at 10:32 am, Sep 27, 2021

Affordable Housing Trust
Joint Meeting with Economic Development Committee
May 13, 2021
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference
As amended 9/22/2021

Roll Call
Present were:
Roll Call:
Phil Eugene,
Roy Mirabito,
Rebecca Young Jones,
George Frantz,
Joe D'Eramo,
Mark Grasso

Roll Call
Present were:
Victoria Petracca, Chair
Frank Streeter, Secretary
Jay Moody
Debra Williams

Chair Victoria Petracca called the Affordable Housing Trust's (AHT) meeting to order over Zoom at 7:10 PM and called the roll of the Trustees. Chair of the Economic

Chair of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) Phil Eugene then called the EDC meeting to order and called the roll of its members at 7:05Pm

Approval of Meeting Minutes
None

Public Comment
See below.

Scheduled Appearance(s)
Sam Gregorio, traffic engineer for Capital Group. (see below)

Roy Mirabito noted that it was public knowledge that the user of the large distribution center in Capital Group's project will be Target, a national retailer. Mirabito referred to an article in the 3/1/21 issue of Forbes magazine about Target's new direct to consumer retail concept and how that might impact traffic from the project if it were used in Lancaster. Traffic Engineer (TE) Gregorio answered concerning the estimated percentage of traffic that will be trucks and their effects on Lancaster's traffic and roadways.

Given that Capital Group's traffic estimates will be critical in getting various approvals for the development project, Secretary Streeter asked if those estimates could be made binding conditions of any permit issued. Capital Group President Bill Depietri said yes and that Capital Group would also agree to deed restrictions relating to traffic. TE Gregorio stated that traffic estimates are binding in MEPA's required permits and if traffic changes materially from those projections MEPA's permits must be reapproved.

Capital Group President Bill Depietri noted that one of their development options for the site is a large 40B development on the part of their back land that is presently zoned residential, but if the Town votes to rezone that land from Residential to Enterprise Capital Group will drop that plan and proceed with their distribution center in the back land and 40R zoning in the front. EDC Member Mark Grasso asked if the 40R zoning would be a compromise for Capital Group and Capital Group President Bill Depietri said it would be.

EDC Member Grasso asked Capital Group about their timeline for rezoning. Capital Group President Bill Depietri responded that it needed to be done by the end of summer. EDC Member Frantz commented that schedule didn't seem to be reasonable given all that needs to be done. Secretary Streeter agreed that holding hearings in August would be bad timing for many people. Chair Petracca stated that approval for a 40R project on the site could be done in 90 days, although she admitted that schedule was aggressive.

EDC Member Mirabito asked about the status of MEPA approvals for the project and Capital Group responded that they expected to submit their latest version by the end of May. EDC Member Joe D'Eramo asked about the configuration of sidewalks and crosswalks in the project and across Route 70. Capital Group noted they are included in its present plan.

EDC Member Grasso asked about Capital Group's proposed timeline and how much flexibility there is in it. The Boards discussed various issues around rezoning and the Annual Town Meeting, including the effects of some citizen's petitions relating to rezoning, especially if they are not approved.

Public Comment

There was extensive public comment concerning 40R zoning, both what it is and the process to implement it, and traffic considerations. Residents' questions about traffic were answered by TE Gregorio. He noted that his maximum traffic projections are for the site's full buildout, which is not projected to happen for about 10 years.

Resident Cara Sanford raised concerns about the project's impact on the Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) around the Nashua River given that over a third of the project, including a great deal of impermeable space, is proposed within the ACEC.

EDC Member Frantz asked if either or both AHT and EDC should issue official statements about the citizen's petitions to rezone the Capital Group's land in North Lancaster. Both he, EDC Chair Eugene and AHT Chair Petracca expressed serious

concerns about the petitions' effect. If they do not pass similar rezoning cannot be brought up at Town meeting for two years from the date of the failed vote, and that delay would have a material impact on Capital Group's plans for the site.

In response to questions TE Gregorio explained the growth rate assumptions behind his various traffic projections and broke them out by road. His projections are based on the historic traffic growth rate remaining the same in the future, adding in the effects of traffic from all known new developments. TE Gregorio commented on existing road usage and truck traffic flows and referred to page 317 in his report for the raw data. He noted that a "trip" is a single pass by a fixed point such that a truck going in and then out of the site would count as two trips. He also noted that traffic leaving the site is likely to be split 50/50 north/south when leaving McGovern Blvd. onto Route 70.

In closing Chair Petracca reviewed action items, including the need to pin down the timing of various steps in the process. She intends to follow up with MRPC about setting design standards for the project, which is a critical part of 40R zoning. EDC Chair Eugene wants to have another joint meeting once MRPC has provided an initial plan, and Chair Petracca wants the meeting to focus on the development of those design standards. She discussed the need for a project timeline with clear milestones. AHT Member Moody expressed his support for the 40R component of the project, and for the project in general.

Adjournment
There being no further business to consider the EDC adjourned at 9:47 PM. Subsequently,

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Eugene, Secretary