

DRACUT HOUSING AUTHORITY AND DRACUT SELECTMEN HOUSING
SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

September 15, 2014
4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Selectman Joe DiRocco, Selectwoman Tami Dristillaris, Commissioner Jesse Forcier,
Commissioner Debra DeWitt Ahern

IN ATTENDANCE: Mary T. Karabatsos, James Hall, Jim Duggan, Glen Edwards

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Commissioner Forcier opened up the meeting stating that he has been discussing with Selectman DiRocco about utilizing the site that the Town Hall Annex is on to build additional senior housing. Commissioner Forcier stated that they have had a lot of good feedback from the Town as well as John Crowley from the Zoning Board of Appeals. They have also met with the Building Inspector. Commissioner Forcier believes that this is a great lot, it is $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre, there are thru streets on both sides which helps with Fire Department access. Under the advice of Jack Crowley we are looking at a comprehensive permit which would alleviate some of the issues with zoning because this property is a B3 so there would have to be some zoning changes. Commissioner Forcier stated that the climate of the neighborhood is conducive to housing. It is a quiet neighborhood that would be great for senior housing.

Selectman DiRocco stated that under the comprehensive permit we would be able to have all the units available for low income individuals. That is our goal. We have not given up on other projects but we are looking for a site that we will be able to develop sooner rather than later. Commissioner Forcier stated that we are looking to build 13 units which would accommodate all low income individuals. Commissioner Forcier stated that we would have to wait and get some seed money before we can determine how many units can fit on the site and how the building will be configured. We will need to do a feasibility study. The property is located near Town Hall, a walk-in- clinic, doctor's offices, and a supermarket.

Selectwoman Dristillaris asked if this was part of the overlay district. Asst. Manager Glen Edwards stated that it is within the overlay district. He also stated that if we utilize a comprehensive permit we would not have to worry about that because the permit would allow a leniency on zoning. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern asked if the Town would be willing to deed the property to us. Town Manager Duggan stated that the Town could convey the property to the housing for a dollar or enter into a long term lease for a nominal fee to be able to make the project work. It would be one governmental body to another which would alleviate the 30B procurement process.

Commissioner Forcier asked Assistant Town Manger Edwards to expand on the comprehensive permit guidelines. Mr. Edwards stated that a comprehensive permit can go in any zone, you can over-ride densities, set-backs, you are not constrained by density issues you would be able to fit more units in there. You could potentially get the number of units that you want on that property. Mr. Edwards

stated that you only have to deal with the Zoning Board of Appeals and Conservation. He also stated that there are no wetlands in that area. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern inquired as to whether or not this had to go to Town Meeting. Attorney Hall stated that the conveyance of the land would have to but not the project. Town Manager Duggan suggested that the most appropriate way to move forward would be for CPC to request seed money at November Town Meeting and that money could be used to determine if this would be a viable project. If that is the case the money for construction could be brought forth at June town meeting. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern stated that she wanted to give an update at the CPC Meeting the following evening. Town Manager Duggan stated that Ms. Ahern could request a special CPC meeting to vote on the warrant article because it is not on the current agenda. CPC would have until Thursday to schedule this and there could be a place holder put on the warrant. If CPC does not support the article then we could remove it.

Selectman DiRocco said that this piece of property would not require a lot of site work. Lakeview Avenue and the Richardson Property require a lot of site work and the state does not have money to give us for these projects. Commissioner Forcier stated that he would bring this to the Board of Commissioners at the meeting tonight. Selectman DiRocco stated that he would inform the Selectmen at the meeting on the 23rd. This would be under Sub-Committee Update. Commissioner Forcier stated that we are going to look for other feasibility money from other sources. CPC would have to initiate the article or put a place holder on November Town Meeting by September 19th. This means that a Special CPC Meeting would have to be called prior to the 19th. Selectman DiRocco does not believe that we could push this through for November Town Meeting. If this were the case the Housing Authority Board would also have to call a special meeting.

Commissioner Forcier inquired what it would cost to have design work done on the Spring Park property. Commissioner Forcier stated that we should ask CPC for not more than \$70,000 for seed money. Selectwoman Dristillaris inquired why we are not moving forward to build on the Richardson Property. Commissioner Forcier stated that the Board of Commissioners took a vote to not move forward at this time with the Richardson Property. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern stated that everyone was interested in the Richardson Property and we initially thought we could put 60 units on the land funded by federal funds. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding the housing authority decided to hold off on the Richardson Property. The scenario that was told to the housing authority was that we as a housing authority would not have control of 60 units. Ms. DeWitt Ahern would like to eventually build on the Richardson Property but feels as though we would move quicker on Spring Park. Building on this site would allow us to put 13 low income elderly individuals into housing much quicker. Ms. DeWitt Ahern believes that we need to start addressing the long waiting lists for senior housing. Ms. DeWitt Ahern stated that the CPC Board will want to know where else we have looked for money and what might be available. Glen Edwards said that the CPC would like everyone to pull together on one project, but if there is another group that believes that we should go with the Richardson Property and there ends up being a fight over this then it will be tough for CPC to make a quick decision on this. Mr. Edwards stated that if everyone can pull together and go in one direction then it could happen at CPC. However, if that can't be done then it would be better to wait until June Town Meeting.

The Town Manager asked if the Board of Commissioners had looked at whether the Richardson Property could be phased in. Mary Karabatsos stated that they had. They talked about initially starting with 13 units and then building 24 units through the state funding rounds. Brian Bond said that the road costs would be \$500,000 which included the wetland crossing. The 60 units would be placed on dry lots away from the wetlands. The wetlands delineation report determined this. There was talk about utilizing the 13 units for the first phase at Richardson. There is still a lot of discussion on this.

Commissioner Forcier asked Mary Karabatsos to report on the information that we received from the Women's Institute. Ms. Karabatsos stated that it would be difficult to get an additional phase for all elderly. Senior housing is not a state priority. It is possible that you could be going through state funding rounds for six years. Town Manager Duggan asked if the CPC is still willing to invest 3 million dollars in a project. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern said that it has not been discussed for a while at CPC. Commissioner Forcier believes that the CPC if given the right plan and the right presentation would be willing. Selectwoman Dristillaris said that we are all over the place. First it was the Lakeview Avenue property, then Richardson and now Spring Park. She stated that we have the Richardson Property why don't we move with that. She also does not believe that we should push this at CPC. Town Manager Duggan said that being completely neutral on this issue you also do not need \$500,000 for site work. That will help your per unit cost come down. If we are looking at moving forward with the least amount of investment then dollar for dollar it is Spring Park. It will cost less to build Spring Park. Brian Bond believes that there is a question about how many units will fit on Spring Park. He believes that it is more like nine units. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern believes that it will cost less to build on Spring Park. Town Manager Duggan believes that any tax revenue that could be derived from the Spring Park property would be minimal. He believes that the neighborhood would prefer to have senior housing on the site rather than either a parking lot for the Bridge Street convenience store or some other business. Town Manager Duggan stated that the Selectmen have put him forward to build on the economic development but he also has to look at fulfilling the need for elderly housing. Town Manager Duggan stated that his recommendation would be to go with Spring Park.

Attorney Hall asked if the Women's Institute could do a feasibility study on the Spring Park site. Mary Karabatsos will have the Women's Institute do that feasibility on Spring Park. Commissioner Forcier believes that this is a start. Everyone wants housing built eventually on Richardson Property. The Spring Park property will move quicker and we will get people off the list sooner. Commissioner Forcier will inform the housing authority tonight on the project. Commissioner Forcier and Selectmen DiRocco stated that we should not go to CPC at this time with this request.