

Franklin Township

Somerset County, New Jersey



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Council

From: Planning Board

Date: October 1, 2008

RE: Fair Share Housing Plan – Review of Proposals for Affordable Housing

On August 6th, the Township's COAH consultant, James Bell of GroupMelvinDesign, provided the Township with his initial assessment of where we stand with respect to our COAH obligation. In summary, Mr. Bell found:

- The Township's net "Third Round" growth share obligation is 1,008 units after factoring in a 137-unit surplus from our prior round obligation (which reduces our net "Third Round" obligation by 137 units).
- After factoring in "Third Round" affordable developments that have already been built, are under construction, have received development approvals, or that have the necessary zoning already in place, we still need to provide around 150 additional COAH units. He also recommends that we go somewhat over to create a "cushion" of excess units in case of any additional future requirements by COAH or in case COAH questions any of the credits we submit.
- We can provide around 65 additional senior units (and stay under the 25% cap on senior affordable units). He also found that we are 99 units under the 25% bonus unit cap (e.g., we get extra credits for units located in a redevelopment area and for family rental units).
- Mr. Bell also noted the newly-imposed requirement that at least 13% of our obligation must be affordable to very-low income households. Mr. Bell and Township staff are currently analyzing where we stand with respect to this new requirement.

Over the last few months a number of developers have approached the Township seeking to be included in the affordable housing plan. Six such plans were presented to the Planning Board at our August 20 worksession. Two more were presented at our September 17th

meeting. Each developer was asked to provide various materials detailing their proposals. These materials are attached hereto for your review.

At the Board's September 24th worksession, the Board discussed the merits of each proposal.¹ Following is a summary of the Board's discussion:²

- Each member of the Board expressed their opinion about the proposals and ranked the proposals. Since the Board was aware that we likely only need a few of the proposals to meet our remaining COAH obligation, emphasis was placed on coming to an initial consensus on the top four projects versus the bottom four projects.
- At this time, the Board is in general agreement that the following four projects have the most merit. The projects are listed in general order of preference with indications of the positive aspects of each of these proposals.
 - Laudaree – Site already zoned for higher-density residential use with development approvals already in place. Site is essentially “ready-to-go.” Significant net COAH benefit compared to existing zoning - i.e., 118 COAH units now proposed (with potential for additional bonus credits) compared to 0 COAH units under existing zoning. Good site due to location on Easton Avenue, access to transportation, and access to shopping and the canal towpath. The Senior Housing Advisory Committee indicated this as the most appropriate site for senior affordable units.
 - Summerfields – Site already zoned for higher-density residential use with development approvals already in place. Site is essentially “ready-to-go.” No increase in proposed density compared to existing zoning/ development approval. Significant net COAH benefit compared to existing zoning - i.e., 180 COAH units now proposed (with significant potential for additional bonus credits) compared to 102 COAH credits under existing zoning (with no potential for bonus credits).
 - Somerset Manor (Springhill Senior) – Good site for senior housing due to location on Hamilton Street, access to transportation and due to historic use of the site for senior housing (a recently-demolished 100-bed assisted living project existed on the site). The Senior Housing Advisory Committee indicated this as the second-most appropriate site for senior affordable units.

¹ On September 24th, the Board received material describing a ninth proposal. The Board decided not to consider that proposal at this time.

² The September 24th worksession was televised and audiotaped. Thus, you are encouraged to listen to, or view, the Board's September 24th discussion.

- Green Commons – Location on Schoolhouse/Mettlers Road is in area of Town with similar existing and proposed higher-density residential uses.
- The bottom four projects were: Kings Row; Kings Row/ Janho; E&J Equities; and Spectrum.
- The Board directed Mr. Bell and Township planning/zoning staff to meet with representatives of each of the top four projects in order to refine each of the proposals so that they best meet the Township's affordable housing obligations. Based upon the results of these discussions and his own analysis of our COAH obligations, Mr. Bell will prepare a draft housing plan for the Board's discussion at the October 22nd worksession.

It is understood that the Mayor and Council will discuss the proposals at their October 14th meeting. The Planning Board looks forward to receiving your comments on the proposals as well as your future input on the draft and final versions of the plan when they are prepared.