

Scituate Housing Authority Special Meeting of April 30, 2014 at St. Mary's Hall:

A meeting of the Scituate Housing Authority Board was advertised and held at 7 P.M. on April 24, 2014. A quorum having been achieved, the Chairman, Stephen Coulter, provided an initial statement to the audience, opening the meeting. The Chair stressed the meeting was the first of several future public informational meetings to be scheduled and was intended for the Board of Commissioners to gain specific input from local residents as to what type of affordability-restricted housing could potentially be constructed at the site for a target date of Spring in 2016. Mr. Joe Armstrong, Affordable Housing Dev. Consultant and Scituate resident, was introduced by the Chair as the pro bono consultant to the Board. At the Chair's request, the meeting was turned over to Mr. Armstrong to serve as Moderator for this public discussion.

Mr. Armstrong presented a slide show detailing the types of choices that must be considered by the Board and local citizens for potential development. These include: owner units or rental housing; and Senior, Disability, or Family oriented housing, among other factors. Upon close of the presentation, Mr. Armstrong called for comments from the audience, who included a large number of local citizens from the immediate neighborhood. These comments, included:

1. Why develop the site at all after a full 22 years have passed since the citizens voted to transfer the land the Housing Authority for development of affordable housing? Could not the town buy the property from the Housing Authority to provide funds for affordable housing new or rehabilitated units somewhere else in town such as the existing Authority lands, and perhaps the land at Kent be used for park space, or simply open space the way it is now?

Response: The SHA owns the property and has a public charge to create and maintain affordability-restricted housing resources for the community. Though this meeting was called to discuss what possible housing types should be considered for the site, we note for the record that several residents have raised this additional possibility whereby the value of the site could be utilized to advance town affordability goals, while not developing the site at all.

2. There are several other high impact public-oriented facilities on the Driftway road running from Dunkin all the way towards the center of town including the golf-course which residents complained had trash all the time along the fence area, the town landfill, the windmill, family Chapter 40B units and others. Accordingly, the town should reconsider development of the site at all.

Response: Though we understand there are several development activity concerns being expressed tonight by local residents regarding a variety of public matters, the SHA only has jurisdiction over the housing issues. Accordingly, residents were told they should contact their local government officials to discuss these other matters.

3. If developed, maximum green "buffer zones" should be maintained all around the outskirts of the site, including the maintenance of the current informal farming arrangement of a portion of the site on the Gilson Road side.

Response: It is the intent of the SHA to maintain as much of the local topography and site plantings as practical in siting the actual buildings within the inner “donut hole” of the site, maintaining maximum current visual and sound buffering for the neighborhood (trees and existing sand mounds).

4. If developed, regular access for residents of the site should be strictly from the New Kent Street side (the main road into downtown) and not from “the rear” (Kent or Driftway when it turns towards the Scituate Country Club).

Response: The SHA Board fully agrees after initial discussions and at this time believes a one-way half-circle loop internal site roadway with both ends existing onto New Driftway road would best serve the site and neighbor needs. The SHA, however, must reserve the right to use a rear-access, gravel-only, locked gate fire and emergency vehicle emergency access way if requested by local safety officials. The siting of this emergency access will be a topic of discussion with the neighborhood at future meetings.

5. If developed, buildings should be designed with minimal, if any, site lines visible from the road and any property address signs should be simple and attractive to fit into the residential character of the neighborhood.

Response: The SHA agrees with this sentiment and advised citizens that two-story buildings would be required if the community indicates a desire for family-oriented affordable housing, but only single-level should they choose, and the SHA approved, senior housing for the site.

6. Residents closed with thanking the Authority for holding this preliminary public meeting and committing to held several more in the future. Residents specifically asked, however, that we expand the method by which local residents are notified so more will be aware this issue is now being discussed.

Response: The SHA promised to improve its posting of the next community meeting, to have representatives walk the site with reps from a local neighborhood group (to be formed), and to fully incorporate comments from the community into its eventual plans for the site. Residents noted this did not happen in 2005, with only one public meeting being held, and that they appreciate the SHA reaching out to the community now, and for future special meetings to be scheduled. In addition, the SHA promised to post documents and maps critical to this proposal on the town webpage for public viewing.