

ZBA FY2020-39, Valley CDC, Comprehensive Permit Application for 132 Northampton Road

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Additional Comments received from July 2, 2020 at 12:00PM until August 4, 2020 at 2:00PM:

1. Burd and Jim Schlessinger, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated July 2, 2020;
2. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated July 2, 2020;
3. Susan DeGrave, Comments Submitted via Email, Dated July 2, 2020;
4. Sarah Marshall, Comments Submitted via Email, Dated July 2, 2020;
5. John Page, Comments Submitted via Email, Dated July 2, 2020;

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MAIN LEGACY FORMS

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Form Center ► Planning Department ► 132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application ► Submission #15310

Comment Form

Dear ZBA Members,

Regarding Valley CDC's special permit application for 132 Northampton Rd, we were stunned to hear that if Valley CDC could not find tenants for the 16 units intended for individuals earning up to 50% or 80% of Amherst AMI, those units would instead be allocated to more service-needy clients. This situation is entirely different from the proposal Valley CDC and its supporters have been selling to the Town Council, and now to the ZBA. The effect on the surrounding neighborhood/s would be significant, and, contrary to what some may say, it is a valid concern.

Add to this, Valley CDC stated in April 2019 that they would not be able to fill 132 Northampton Rd with Amherst residents and would have to recruit from other towns. And, the price tag for this project has now increased to \$7.5 million, many times higher than the average cost per square foot for construction in Amherst.

If you haven't already done so, you should read the New York Times article We Could Be Feeling This for the Next Decade: Virus Hits College Towns by Shawn Hubler (June 28, 2020). The Town of Amherst is mentioned as an example of the changes that are coming to college and university campuses across the country, and the towns in which they are located, due to Covid-19. The article makes the point that thousands of students will not be returning to campuses anytime soon, instead studying remotely from elsewhere. As a result, among other things, pressure on the rental housing market will be greatly reduced. Houses and apartments that formerly were rented to students will become available at more affordable rates. Houses that had been rented to students will come up for sale at more reasonable prices - they could be converted to affordable housing, some units could be SROs. Responsibility would be shared across the town, as it should be.

The Town Council, the ZBA, and other governing bodies should take into account the changed reality in which we now live. They should also address the needs and concerns of all Amherst citizens.

We respectfully request that you delay issuing a 40B Comprehensive Permit to Valley CDC for this project.

Sincerely,
Burd and Jim Schlessinger

Please type comments in the box above.

Attachments

Choose File No file chosen

Please upload attachments above

SAVE CHANGES

CANCEL

Form Details

Submitted By:

Submitted On:
July 2, 2020 5:12 PM

IP Address:
24.62.207.180

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<https://www.amherstma.gov/FormC...>
Department-34/132-Northampton-Road-Comments-on-40B-Com-174

Answered 1 of 2 (50.0%)

Help

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132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15311

Date Submitted: 7/2/2020

Comment Form

This evening, July 2 has been interesting. I was disappointed in some of the "shaming" language. Certainly, shaming does not encourage anyone to share their concerns and did leave a bad taste in my mouth.

Several folks highlighted "community" and yet it wasn't clearly stated, or perhaps understood that local preference if required is only required initially. Any subsequent tenancy will be by open lottery.

There was a great deal of focus on homelessness and yet less than 50% of the populations is slated to be for homelessness.

There was no discussion on length of tenancy. I would assume it would be a goal of the support services folks to foster self sufficiency and therefore want to encourage skill development and encourage financial autonomy particularly given the connection between a person's sense of worth and self-sufficiency. Shouldn't this be part of the supportive services plan?

There was discussion re the trees along the property line between 132 and 126... looking on line, it states the roots are shallow. The trees are close to 60 years old. As for the lighting... given we are up hill, and sleep on the second floor, I am not concerned about the light. Laura mentioned the tree branches supporting each other but given we have had tops of the trees break and fall as well as continuous smaller branches littering our yard and making it necessary to clean the yard prior to mowing.

Given all the discussion about how walk-able this site is, I assume that could mean some folks would walk to work which might skew the comment about available parking spaces during the day vs evenings and weekend.

Thank you.

Please type comments in the box above.

Attachments

No files chosen

Please upload attachments above

From: [Susan DeGrave](#)
To: [Pollock, Maureen](#)
Subject: can you post this rebuttal to the water issue, please?
Date: Thursday, July 2, 2020 3:14:50 PM

Hi Maureen, I can't seem to find where to post more comments, can you post this before the meeting at 6:30, or ASAP?

The water and sewer issue is not comparable to someone being Homeless!!

Here's what the town of Amherst memo about water said:

1. Water will go up on average \$36 a YEAR, sewer \$72 a year. So that is about \$100 a year; that's not good news for seniors, but is only about **EIGHT DOLLARS a month.**

2. **"I note that, even with this increase, the Town's water and sewer rates are \$401 below the statewide average and significantly lower than neighboring communities as shown on the chart below."**

Without calling you out by name: Please STOP these scare tactics by presenting misleading and incomplete information!!

Anonymous

From: [Sarah Marshall](#)
To: [Pollock, Maureen](#)
Subject: Valley CDC project
Date: Thursday, July 2, 2020 4:22:41 PM

Dear ZBA,

I write to urge your support for the Valley CDC proposal for 28 units of affordable housing at their Northampton Rd. site. Such a project will provide much-needed housing options for people who can not otherwise find affordable housing in Amherst - and the additional economic distress caused by the coronavirus pandemic only makes this project more important. Please come to a speedy resolution of the outstanding issues so the project may move ahead.

Best regards,
Sarah Marshall
64 Eames Ave.

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Please note my new email address.

From: [John Page](#)
To: [Pollock, Maureen](#)
Cc: [Hornik, John](#); [Laura Baker](#)
Subject: Support for Valley Community Development
Date: Thursday, July 2, 2020 5:07:34 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi Maureen, if you would forward this to the ZBA members in advance of tonight's hearing I would appreciate it. Thanks so much!

Good Evening ZBA Members,

I write you as a resident of Amherst. I disclose that I both work from the Amherst Affordable Housing Trust a few hours a week and the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce. However, while my experiences there inform my thinking, I am writing you this evening as an individual.

I hope you will be steadfast in your granting of a compressive permit for Valley Community Development's studio apartments proposed for 132 Northampton Road. The need for this type of housing has been well documented and is not currently being served by other past and future affordable and workforce housing developments. This is the right location for this type of project with proximity to amenities, outdoor space, bus lines, shopping, the Downtown, and our University and College. On an active road with a combination of Victorian and Colonial mammoths of single-family homes and residential buildings for Amherst College, homes with families, and several rental properties, this type of housing will fit in as a compliment to the current population, neighborhood, and even architecturally in massing. I hope future residents are welcomed with open arms into this neighborhood, as many have played an active role in the shaping of this final proposal. Valley has done a tremendous job working with the community performing countless outreach functions, and conducting themselves with utmost integrity and transparency. In response to concerns and ideas of community members Valley has changed and adapted this project significantly.

This project addresses several of our stated community goals regarding housing development, the production of affordable units, addressing individuals who are homeless and in transition through a housing first model, having a heterogeneous options of housing in our community, and even our sustainability and tax revenue goals are enhanced by this project.

I have watched this project grow and develop for years now, and if you reviewed the testimony given at previous meetings and letters you may have seen my name several times. I hope you will head the recommendation of several Town Boards and Committees, a dozen social service agencies, and scores of community members and move this project forward without delay and grant the comprehensive permit with as few conditions as possible especially without a reduction of units, for removing units from this project would both be antithetical to the goal of creating badly need housing and likely render the project not financial feasible.

Thank you for your time.

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Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Page". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop on the 'P' and a trailing flourish on the 'e'.

John Page
683 E Pleasant St.
Amherst, MA 01002