

Planners expect to approve Crosswinds site plan in July

Editor's Note: The story that ran in Thursday's paper about Crosswinds was actually an article from May's meeting. This is the story that should have ran Thursday from the commission's June 14 meeting.

By John Mason

Hudson Valley Newspapers

The Planning Commission officially expects to approve the site plan for the 70-unit Crosswinds workforce housing project at its July 12 meeting.

Stopping short of a conditional approval, the commission passed a resolution Wednesday saying that, since the only outstanding issue is sewer capacity, upon review of the applicant's sewer report by the commission's engineer, the commission expects to pass on the state Environmental Quality Review and issue a site plan approval at its next meeting.

The development also got nearly unanimous thumbs up from citizens speaking at



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The site of the proposed Crosswinds affordable housing project off Harry Howard Avenue, Hudson, adjacent to the Hudson Middle School, background left.

the public hearing preceding Wednesday's meeting.

Crosswinds is a 70-unit affordable housing project proposed for Harry Howard Avenue between Hudson Middle School and Under-

hill Pond. The developers are the 3d Development Group out of Erie County and Housing Resources of Columbia County.

The current proposal calls for 18 one-bedroom

HUDSON

Fire chief calls proposed housing 'safe'

By John Mason

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Out of nine speakers at the Planning Commission's public hearing on the Crosswinds workforce housing development Wednesday, eight spoke strongly in favor of the plan. One was Fire Chief Timothy Hutchings, who has raised questions about the safety of truss construction in some new housing in the city.

Hutchings said he has been meeting with developers Bruce Levine of 3d

Development and Kevin O'Neill of Housing Resources of Columbia County, and considers the proposed housing "sound" and "safe."

"Everything is beyond our expectations," he said. The houses are fully sprinklered, so the water damage will be minimal compared to what it would be with fire hoses. The fire hydrants on the site will have a flow rate of 500 gallons a minute.

Hutchings said they were

discussing having the fire alarms ring into the 911 center so the call could be dispatched immediately; he's also asking for truss placards and visible marking of sprinkler connections.

He also asked about a "preferred list for volunteer firefighters. We've lost members because of the housing cost increases," he said.

Linda Mussmann, executive director of Time & Space

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apartments, 34 two-bedroom apartments and 18 three-bedroom apartments. The rents would always be less than 30 percent of 60 percent of the median income; in other words, less than 18 percent of the median income.

Rodney Morrison, an engineer working for the applicants, said it was clear there was a problem with sewer backup on Harry Howard Avenue during storm events. The cause of this is, he said, as with most older cities, stormwater infiltrating the

sewer lines.

The Hudson Department of Public Works, supported by a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant, last year added linings to the Harry

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Howard sewer lines to address this problem. Morrison said the DPW had no idea how their improvements were working, so his group agreed to do monitoring in the manholes to find that out, as well as information needed for their own application.

They learned two things: One, that the lining project was successful; and two, that there is still a lot of stormwater getting in at connection points.

Morrison recommended that the city act to address this at Michael Court. At the end of the court, he said, a catch basin is connected into the sewer line. During a one-year storm event — a storm that occurs statistically once a year — 24,000 gallons of stormwater are added to the sewer line from Michael Court.

This could be stopped by removing the line from the catch basin to the sewer line and putting in 550 feet of storm line to the existing stormwater system, he said. The cost would be \$50 to \$60 a linear foot, or in the neighborhood of \$30,000.

Commission member Carmine A. Pierro Jr. said there is \$90,000 left from the CDBG funds.

Asked whether they were

offering to foot this bill, or part of it, 3d head Bruce Levine said, "This is a problem that will exist no matter whether we build. We have a finite amount of money: Every dollar that goes into some off-site project eats away at our budget."

"The city has this money," Pierro said. "It has to be used for sewer projects on Harry Howard."

Whether or not Michael Court is fixed, the sewer line has plenty of capacity for the 18,000 gallons a day Crosswinds will add to it: "The existing line could carry 1 million gallons a day," Morrison said. During a two-year storm, he said, only 22 percent of the capacity would be taken up.

However, a 10-year storm event would fill it to capacity, and this is why Morrison was urging the city to close the stormwater entry points.

He also said the existing water line has a flow rate of pressure adequate for both fire and residential needs of the proposed development. But he added there will be an additional water opportunity coming down the avenue in the next couple of months: an extension of the water line to the Firemen's Home.

"If the new line has sub-

stantially better pressure and the city says, 'Connect to it,' we would do that," Morrison said.

Crosswinds may install a dry hydrant in Underhill Pond, he said, which would be useful to the Fire Department not only in the development, but in the surrounding neighborhood.

Commission Engineer Chris Round said he had just received Morrison's data on the sewer system the night before the meeting, and had not had time to analyze it; and that it was not in a usable format. Morrison said he would resubmit it, and Round said he would be able to analyze it within a week.

Morrison and Levine asked the commission to give them a conditional approval, which they said would help them with pending state grant applications.

Commission Attorney Jeff Baker said this would be a pointless approval, but he drew up a resolution stating the board's expectation of approving the plan.

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Ltd., called Crosswinds "a great project. I'm convinced Mr. Levine will do a great job for the city."

Mussmann said she has employees who need housing they can afford. And she said she was sure Levine would also help the city with its sewer problems.

Eleanor Perry, of Christ Church Episcopal, Hudson, told five "sad stories" about housing she has encountered among her congregation: stories about elderly people facing rent hikes and eviction, a mother and children having to leave the area because of eviction and a woman in a dangerous domestic situation unable to afford the first and last months' rent plus security deposit she needed to move into an apartment of her own.

"To be a great city, you have to take care of your people," Perry said. "I can't say that any of these people could qualify for Crosswinds, but the situation is desperate. It needs a multi-prong solution. This is one piece. People's lives could be improved with safe, affordable housing."

Chamber of Commerce President David Colby said, "We feel this is very important

for our businesses. Our businesses provide 10,000 jobs. It's important to have housing for businesses to grow in the future. We'll do anything we can to support the group doing this."

Mayor Richard F. Tracy said he had found the Crosswinds developers to be "a group we could work with," who "addressed [matters] in a timely fashion, with genuine interest."

He said he became more convinced of their sincerity and the worth of the project when he went on a walk-through with the Planning Commission. "In time something will go in there — I feel this will be a reasonable fit."

Tina Sharpe, executive director of Columbia Opportunities said she supports Crosswinds as a way to address the housing shortage, which bodes ill for the area's service economy.

"We employ 83 people at an average of \$11 an hour," he said. "Many of them have been affected by the rising costs of housing. We believe it will be important to the economy that the housing needs of all our employees are met ... We're disappointed that the city did-

n't grant the PILOT [payment in lieu of taxes]."

Tod Erling, deputy executive director of the Columbia Hudson Partnership, said available workforce housing is "a critical feature of the economic base."

Carol Doerfer, who lives nearby the proposed development on Harry Howard Avenue, said she was concerned about whether the infrastructure could handle the development, in addition to the new Elks' Club and the Firemen's Home. "I'm afraid this will exacerbate the problem," she said.

Kevin O'Neill, executive director of Housing Resources of Columbia County, said the shrinking of the available housing market for low-to-middle-income people has shrunk dramatically in the past six years.

"Seventy [units] is a lot of homes," he said. "They're nice quality, built to last, well maintained." HRCC is a partner with 3d Development in the Crosswinds venture.

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