

The Department of Planning & Economic Development held a Public Hearing on the proposed amendments to the zoning ordinances of the City of Brockton under the provisions of Smart Growth Zoning MGL C. 40R and 760 CMR 59.00 on Tuesday, October 18, 2016 in the Auditorium at Our Lady of Sorrows Convent, 261 Thatcher Street, at 6:00 pm.

City Planner Rob May called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and explained that this was a proposal for a new 40R district. He explained that although 40R allows for the "by-right development of properties" project must adhere to strict guidelines. He said that this hearing was a requirement before submittal to the state. He said this amendment will also require public hearing by the Planning Board and a public hearing and approval from the City Council.

Attorney James Burke said The Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Inc. (POUA), on behalf of the Sisters, has been working with the City of Brockton (COB) to craft language for the ordinance along with the guidelines. The Sister's have owned the property since the 1940's and would like to provide the COB with a first rate project that would benefit the City.

Lisa Alberghini said POUA is an independent arm of the Archdiocese; and provide high quality housing (2,700 units currently); she said they work closely with the communities.

David Aiken said that the boundaries of the proposed 40R consist of only the Sister's property. The project would consist of up to 175 units of town home type structures; sidewalks out to Thatcher and they are proposing to connect the side walk on Thatcher to the college; internal circulation would be built to mimic public roads; BAT also has an interest in an additional bus stop. He said POUA owns and operates all their properties.

Rob May asked David to address the current R1C zoning, infrastructure and proposed amenities under 40R. David said they would be able to build 10 single family homes under the current R1C zoning. He also said that the property is currently tax exempt and would become taxable. He said they are looking at a possible community gathering area; playground and possible garden plots. He said there is on site management. David said they have been told that there is sufficient capacity at the treatment plant and that the city has water.

Rob May asked Sister Mary about the project. She said the project fits the legacy of the order; their goal is to help the COB. Sister Mary stated that her Order had purchased that property from the COB. It had once been the City's "Poor Farm." The Sisters had a history of helping low income families and that developing affordable housing for working families would be a fitting legacy for their work.

At this time Rob May opened up the hearing to public testimony.

Councilor Studenski said he lives around the corner; and this would be a beautiful place for people to live; it takes a place with character and gives it more character.

Tom Thibeault said he has toured some of POUA's properties and has spoken with some residents. Mr. Thibeault was in favor of the proposal.

Jeanne Holmes-Kireilas spoke in opposition and had a lot of questions and concerns. She stated that affordable housing was a problem in Brockton and that children from new multi-family developments were a burden. She felt that low income residents were being dumped in Brockton. She said that affordable housing was the wrong use for this site, and if the Sisters wanted a legacy she suggested they could build a sports complex.

She asked David Aiken what the revenue difference to the city was between the single family homes and the townhomes and was told that they did not have that information available. She asked if they would have the information before presenting to Council and asked that she be furnished with the information. David said they would get the information before appearing before Council. She said she would rather see a single family development.

She said this is not what the COB needs; she said that the Council just voted and created a "monster" of affordable housing in downtown and said there is no need for this type of project and that it will cause more problems than good. She said affordable housing is a problem...low income residents are dumped in Brockton. She said she is concerned about the addition of children to already overcrowded schools...classroom size is suffering. She said that 1,096 units were approved by Council and Brockton has the highest numbers of 40R units in the state.

Ms. Holmes-Kirelias asked David Aiken where the water would come from....he stated that they intend to purchase the water from the COB. She said that there were insufficient water resources for new development.

She said that the project does not meet the 40R criteria and that the developer was trying to put a square peg in a round hole. Furthermore she said Brockton is being overrun by 40R projects. She said the city already has an unsuccessful 40R project in "Enso". She said no one wants to live in Brockton.

She is concerned that the Council will lose control.

Following Ms. Holmes-Kirelisa' testimony, Rob May asked if anyone else wanted to speak, ask questions or provide comments. There were not.

Rob May closed the Public Hearing at 7:20 pm.