



**VILLAGE HILL NORTHAMPTON
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mayor's Office

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en. Stanley C. Rosenberg
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Northampton

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Neighborhood Representative

MEETING MINUTES

**Citizens Advisory Committee
for Village Hill Northampton**

**Wednesday, February 8, 2012
5:00 pm**

In conference room at Haskell Building, Village Hill

Present: Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee

<i>Name:</i>	<i>As representative of:</i>
Mayor David Narkewicz	City of Northampton
Jami Albro-Fisher	Route 10 Neighborhood
Harriet Diamond	Grove Street Neighborhood
Bruce Fogel, Esq.	Northampton Chamber of Commerce
Francis A. Johnson	Northampton Planning Board
Rutherford Platt	National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Paul Spector	Ward 2 City Councilor
Christopher Zabik	Department of Mental Health

Absent: Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee

<i>Name:</i>	<i>As representative of:</i>
Martha Ackelsberg	Northampton Housing Partnership
Joseph Blumenthal	Route 66 Neighborhood
Charles DeRose	Northampton Development Corporation
David Drake	Historical Preservation
Rev. R. Leroy Moser	National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Michael Rabourn	Northampton Labor Council
Edward Skroski	Northampton Development Corporation
Daniel Yacuzzo	Northampton Chamber of Commerce

City Staffers Present:

Peg Keller	City Housing Coordinator
Carolyn Misch	City Planning Office: Senior Land Use Planner/Permits Manager

Development Team Present:

MassDevelopment	
Elizabeth Murphy	Vice President, Real Estate Development; Project Manager of Village Hill
Richard Henderson	Executive Vice President, Real Estate
Patrick Goggins	President, Goggins Real Estate

Others Present:

Benjamin Spencer	Rust Avenue resident
Thomas Riddell	Aldrich Street resident; Smith College professor
Sarah McDonald	Smith College; Tom Riddell's student
Judy & Orville Pierson	Moser Street residents
Tam Ward	Village Hill Road resident
Kathy Lewis	Village Hill Road resident
Marilyn Huffman	Village Hill Road resident
Barbara Kirchner	Former president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Western MA, Inc.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Narkewicz called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Election of Meeting Chair

Mayor Narkewicz stated that the legislation by which the State turned over the former State Hospital property to the City provided for a Citizens Advisory Committee with a chair to be elected from among its members every year. In fulfillment of that proviso, the Mayor opened up the floor to nominations for Chair of the CAC.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC nominated Mayor David Narkewicz.

Rutherford Platt, CAC seconded that nomination.

No other names were offered.

By unanimous vote, Mayor Narkewicz was elected CAC Chair.

- *Kathy Lewis, Village Hill Road:* Why is the Mayor the new chair? Who was the previous chair?
- *Mayor Narkewicz:* Mayor Higgins. But regardless of who was the previous chair, the CAC is charged with electing its chair on a regular basis. Since this is the first CAC meeting held under my tenure as Mayor, I placed election of the chair on the agenda.
- *Frandy Johnson, CAC:* I feel that the Mayor should not chair the City Council meetings, should not chair the School Committee meetings, and should not automatically chair the CAC meetings. CAC is represented by a broad range of citizens, only a few connected with government. CAC is not necessarily an arm of city government.
- *Mayor David Narkewicz:* I agree, which is why I opened this CAC meeting with an election for chair.

- **Councilor Paul Spector, CAC:** May the Mayor chair and should the Mayor chair are two different questions. Nobody else stepped forward tonight to be CAC chair.
- **Kathy Lewis, Village Hill Road:** Will someone research whether it is legal for Mayor to chair?
- **Mayor David Narkewicz:** Legally any CAC member may chair.
- **Rutherford Platt, CAC:** As a larger issue I'm concerned by what the CAC's role will be going forward. We now have a real community of people living at Village Hill who are not represented on the CAC.
- **Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC:** this committee was established by state legislation and mayor, with access to city resources, happened to chair. She didn't become chair because she was the mayor.

3. Approval of Minutes

Approve the minutes of the 06/23/11 meeting of the CAC:

Moved by **Harriet Diamond**, seconded by **Christopher Zabik**.

Voted in the affirmative (*Narkewicz, Fogel, Spector* abstained as they had not attended the meeting)

4. Residential and Commercial Project Update

Beth Murphy of MassDevelopment summarized:

- Kollmorgen and Volz-Clarke fully in place
- Hilltop Apartments with 33 units (26 affordable)
- Morningside Homes (11 single-family homes)
- a number of roads in place (Olander Drive, Moser Street, Musante Drive)
- 24 single-family bungalow lots to be built by The Pecoy Companies from West Springfield
- In talks for commercial office development on Lot 18
- Another now not-buildable lot needs 6-10,000 square feet of parking; in talks with DCAM (State's Division of Capital Asset Management)
- Homeowners associations (the North Association & the South Association) are forming
- Plan to build 6 houses instead of 15 townhouses.

There is a variety of units and a variety of affordability. Beth repeated that the Master Plan is conceptual.

Rutherford Platt, CAC: 15% of units will be earmarked for Department of Mental Health clients, presumably in apartments.

Beth Murphy: Yes.

Jami Albro-Fisher, CAC: What are the counts for those units at the affordable market rate and the count for DMH units. I request that information for the next CAC meeting.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: I assume the Kollmorgen square footage satisfies the % of commercial development required?

Beth Murphy: Yes.

Benjamin Spencer, Rust Avenue resident: Does that mean there will be no further commercial development at the campus?

Beth Murphy: No, by Special Permit 140,000 square feet had to be built before we could permit the residential building.

Marilyn Huffman, Village Hill Road resident: What is the status of the Coach House?

Beth Murphy: We have had 3 commercial offers so far, but we need to find the right business.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: Is the assisted living facility still conceptual?

Beth Murphy: That is still slated as Lot #19, but the last offer was in 2008.

Tam Ward, Village Hill Road resident: Any plans for a community space?

Beth Murphy: It is too soon to tell, but the co-housing option has generous community space sketched in.

Harriet Diamond, CAC: I think you are jumping the gun to say there is no possibility of a community space. When the City's new fire station was built the old station was bought by a private business that included a community space in its plans to redevelop the building. It is important that Village Hill residents make known their desire for a community space on site and important that it becomes part of the negotiation from the start.

Rutherford Platt, CAC: The basement space in the Hilltop management office is unused; rental agent some time ago said air conditioners were stored there in winter. These rooms could be furnished and offered as community space. Village Hill is formerly State owned land. The developer now enjoys its benefits at a very low or no cost. There should be a provision for providing the community with community space.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: I would not characterize MassDevelopment as taking over free land. The demolition cost was huge, over \$12 million.

Councilor Paul Spector, CAC: In response to several residents' mention that there is no communication across the various sections of campus, agreed to set up an email list by which residents can keep in touch.

Jami Albro-Fisher, CAC: This Committee has oversight of the Master Plan. Other City committees, such as the Planning Board, handle the nuts and bolts of decisions.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: The CAC is to guide and assist the developer, with a more visionary than a managing function. It is not within the CAC's purview to oversee apartment management.

Frandy Johnson, CAC: Planning Board approves the designs from developers, making sure that each design meets the City zoning requirements.

Marilyn Huffman, Village Hill Road resident: Where do I as a resident have input in all this?

Mayor David Narkewicz, CAC chair: Here at CAC meetings and at Planning Board meetings.

Barbara Kirchner, former NAMI president: We have heard a number of concerns from residents of Village Hill tonight. How will their concerns reach the next level? Why isn't there a Village Hill resident member on CAC?

Frandy Johnson, CAC: I strongly support having Village Hill residents as members of the CAC, but the CAC already has 16 members. Simply adding 3 resident members will make the committee unwieldy.

Mayor Narkewicz: The next logical step is to have residential input. I will research that process.

5. Conceptual Master Plan Update

Beth Murphy of MassDevelopment displayed the current and proposed new Conceptual Master Plan. CAC's page of the City website shows each iteration:
http://www.northamptonma.gov/nshcac/Current_Conceptual_Plan/

North Employees Home: we volunteered to look at feasibility to keep it open.

North Infirmary was quickly assessed as not able to be reused.

We're looking to get a marketable commercial tenant; nothing there now.

We have 3 roadways, which is one too much; way too much pavement for the amount of development. Park is on slope, least accessible park on site. We conceptualized co-housing here at first; it works better elsewhere.

Little pocket park to protect oak tree doesn't even cover the entire tree.

Had very good discussions with The Community Builders to do market study re live/work space at Male Attendants Bldg; doesn't need much parking; good neighbor to Hillside Apartments.

Developer put lots of work (architects and engineers) into cohousing; how to move forward to Request For Proposals. This would include spacious community space, has series of walkways, a real common, cars are secondary, but we need to remove a road, which means taking down the North Employees Home.

Reasons for demolishing the North Employees Building at Village Hill Northampton

1. **Cost:** Approximately \$3 million to renovate resulting in only 8 units or approximately \$375,000 per unit. A developer would need extensive subsidy to write down that cost to make it affordable. Primary source of subsidy is Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). These have already been awarded twice to TCB at Village Hill for Hilltop and Hillside apartments. DHCD is highly unlikely to award a third round to the same project
2. **Scale of Development:** Affordable housing developers typically need a minimum of 30 - 40 units to develop at one time in order to achieve economies of scale, spreading fixed costs over a larger number of units to reduce per unit price. The North Employees Home can accommodate eight units, significantly increasing the difficulty to redevelop the building.
3. **Configuration of the Building:** The dimensions of the building – particularly the east-west sectional dimension – and the location of columns in the building make it impossible to produce an efficient layout of units. Likewise, the low floor-to-ceiling height of nine feet limits the redevelopment/reuse potential of the building. These factors adversely affect the unit count and the cost per unit.
4. **Topography and Site Layout:** Due to existing site topography and the location of the North Employees Home, the north/south road on the west side of the building (that is part of the approved conceptual master plan) is forced to come very close to the west side of the building. This is not a condition that could ever be acceptable to future residents. If the building is removed, the road can be moved more to the east to improve the grades, the sight lines, and the safety of intersection connecting to the north road.
5. **Location:** Artist live/work units were proposed for the building as part of the previously-approved conceptual master plan. Upon further investigation, it now appears that the

North Employees Home is not a suitable location for this use. Rather, artist live/work units should be located in highly visible/accessible locations to promote sales of the artists' work and to energize and complement adjacent commercial businesses.

6. **Building Orientation:** The North-South orientation of the building (and the pitched roof) severely limits possibilities for active (photovoltaic (PV) panels) and passive (space heating and day lighting) use of solar energy.
7. **Timing of Redevelopment:** Roads and utilities to connect to the building will not be built for 5-10 years, leaving the building to further deteriorate and continue to be a negative for the project as it is unoccupied and subject to vandalism.
8. **Location and Design of New-Construction Artist Live/Work Units:** Newly built artist live/work units that are sited in the lower North Campus can be designed to: 1) create efficient, workable, and comfortable units with suitable gallery and/or retail space in the same building; 2) maximize energy efficiency and solar energy utilization; and, 3) establish neighborhood pedestrian circulation patterns beneficial to a home business.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment, continued: Bringing down North Employees Home additionally provides the opportunity to put the memorial site here, on site of the original fountain. The landscape architect analyzed the spot of the original fountain and there is a good chance of placing the Memorial Park there.

We've had good discussions with The Community Builders about live/work space. They will conduct a market study for the Male Attendants Building. Live/work doesn't require as much parking and is a good neighbor for Hilltop Apartments. Live/work needs to be in the commercial area, on the main road, where there is traffic and pedestrians; we want that enlivening influence to be in the main flow. We hope to attract co-housing above that. Perhaps the Coach House could be used or rented out as part of co-housing; we're ready to start marketing that. Zoning on Village Hill was changed to zero frontage, providing an opportunity for houses on slope with a nice view of Beech Park.

Mayor Narkewicz, CAC chair: What is the difference in units with removing that road?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: 256; previous iteration had 289. We have an RFP out now for further townhouses. It may turn out that townhouses are very popular and more of them will be built there. We are testing the market for new townhouses.

Harriet Diamond, CAC: What drives these changes?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: We knew there were unresolved engineering issues. What stuck us first is that there is too much roadway as is.

Harriet Diamond: The size of the homes shown on the Northern Campus look bigger, why?

Beth Murphy: This is market driven; what buyers want will determine the size of the homes. As we fill in more pieces, what will work elsewhere becomes more evident.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: You moved the detention pond from the upper left; was that topography driven?

Beth Murphy: After more engineering; we are now confident that the detention pond can be moved.

Peg Keller, City Housing Coordinator: Is there no affordable component to the bungalows?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: There is a \$350K cap on bungalows.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: I'm not seeing as much job creation aspect as live/work in your presentation, especially as Coach House had been designated for commercial. Is there not some complementary business piece you can offer at that location?

Beth Murphy: Identifying additional commercial locations is not feasible at this point. We did market the Coach House as commercial for years. There will be separate retail locations to complement the live/work area.

Bruce Fogel, Esq.: I just wanted to be sure it had been discussed and found unworkable, and not simply dismissed.

Frandy Johnson, CAC: Please point out all commercial space on North Campus.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: Lots #1, #12B, #18, #19, the DCAM lot, #20, and Coach House. Live/work really does have a commercial component: its liveliness is an economic driver.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: What have you done to keep the Coach House commercial?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: We replaced the roof, rebuilt the dormers, developed the site plan and will build Ford Crossing in the spring. We will make the Coach House desirable. Past interest on that space came from daycare very early on, publishing, architects, and financial firms. The Coach House has very special challenges: 2nd floor has weight load issues; lofts would work. 1st floor is 5,500 square feet.

Richard Henderson, MassDevelopment: Another reason why we decided to have cohousing there instead of all the way in the back is that we'll build the needed road very soon, not far in future.

Beth Murphy: Cohousing takes more time to develop. We need to identify a certain type of people first as it's not a housing type for everybody;

Mayor Narkewicz, CAC chair: You have made your presentation so that the CAC could preview the proposed changes. At our next meeting you will ask the CAC to support these changes to the conceptual plan. We are not changing the unit caps.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: This is not a technical change as it does not change the residential/commercial caps, but we do wish to have CAC's vote of support.

6. New Business

Mayor Narkewicz, CAC chair: We need to reconvene and reenergize the memorial committee. The original fountain that we have in storage now can be reinstalled at its original location.

7. Next Meeting

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2012
5:00 – 6:30 PM
HASKELL BUILDING AT VILLAGE HILL
in the 2nd floor conference room**

8. Adjournment

There being no more questions, **Mayor David Narkewicz, CAC chair**, entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Corinne Philippides, Mayoral Aide
February 29, 2012*