



**VILLAGE HILL NORTHAMPTON
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mayor's Office

210 Main Street Room 12
Northampton, MA 01060-3199
(413) 587-1249 Fax: (413) 587-1275
mayor@northamptonma.gov

Senator Stanley C. Rosenberg
City Councilor

Representative Peter Kocot
City Councilor

Mayor David Narkewicz
Northampton

City Councilor
City Councilor

Christopher Zabik
Department of Mental Health

Erin Moser
*Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Northampton, Inc.*

Erin Platt
*Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Northampton, Inc.*

Edward Skroski
Northampton Development Corporation

DeRose
Northampton Development Corporation

Yacuzzo
Northampton Chamber of Commerce

Fogel, Esq.
Northampton Chamber of Commerce

Michael Rabourn
Northampton Labor Council

Ackelsberg
Northampton Housing Partnership

Johnson
Northampton Planning Board

Drake
Historical Preservation

Blumenthal
Route 66 Neighborhood

Harriet Diamond
Route 66 Neighborhood

Jami Albro-Fisher
Route 10 Neighborhood

MEETING MINUTES

**Citizens Advisory Committee
for Village Hill Northampton**

**Wednesday, March 7, 2012
5:00 pm**

**Haskell Building Community Room
at Village Hill**

Present: Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee

<i>Name:</i>	<i>As representative of:</i>
Mayor David Narkewicz	City of Northampton
Martha Ackelsberg	Northampton Housing Partnership
Joseph Blumenthal	Route 66 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 4 City Councilor
Christopher Zabik	Department of Mental Health

Absent: Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee

<i>Name:</i>	<i>As representative of:</i>
Jami Albro-Fisher	Route 10 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:

Carolyn Misch	Senior Land Use Planner/Permits Mgr.
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Development Team Present:

Elizabeth Murphy	Mass Development, Vice President, Real Estate Development; Project Manager of Village Hill
Richard Henderson	MassDevelopment, Executive Vice President, Real Estate
Jan Brodie	The Community Builders
Rachana Crowley	The Community Builders
Andrew Crystal	Vice President, O'Connell Development Group
Patrick Goggins	President, Goggins Real Estate

Others Present:

Arlene Avakian	Olander Drive resident
Martha Ayres	Olander Drive resident
Barbara Blumenthal	Chapel Street resident
Eleanor Cook	Rust Avenue resident
Rank Demaree	Rust Avenue resident
Jacqueline Duda	The Fountain Committee
Janet Grant	Olander Drive resident
Marilyn Huffman	Village Hill Road resident
Barbara Kirchner	Former president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Western MA, Inc.
Kathy Lewis	Village Hill Road resident
Libby McLarty	Barrett Street resident
Orville Pierson	Moser Street resident
Judy Pierson	Moser Street resident
Benjamin Spencer	Rust Avenue resident
Jane Thurber	Easthampton resident
Thomas Riddell	Smith College professor & Aldrich Street resident
Sarah McDonald	Smith College student

1. Call to Order

Mayor Narkewicz called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

2. Introduction of CAC

Mayor Narkewicz asked the CAC members to introduce themselves by name and the constituency each represents on the CAC.

3. Public Comment

- Marilyn Huffman, resident of Village Hill Road, asked for contact information to see if a Haskell Building room might be available for an initial organizing meeting of Village Hill tenants.

- Barbara Kircherr reminded everyone that Village Hill residents should be represented on the CAC membership roster. *Mayor Narkewicz* expects that the Village Hill tenants gather as a group and nominate someone for CAC membership.

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the 02/08/12 meeting of the CAC was moved by *Councilor Paul Spector*, seconded by *Bruce Fogel, Esq.*, and voted in the affirmative (**Mayor Narkewicz, Blumenthal, Diamond, Fogel, Johnson, Platt, Spector, and Zabik**); **Ackelsberg** abstained as she had not attended the meeting.

5. Vote on Updated Conceptual Master Plan

Beth Murphy of MassDevelopment offered a summary. The Conceptual Master Plan, which is the framework for the entire development of Village Hill, was put in place in 2009. 337 is the cap for residential units, there is generous open space, and roadways. It was always understood that road layout could change, and that there would be different numbers of the various types of housing unit as more engineering was completed and in accordance with the housing market. As we achieved more engineering and more architects' design we would figure out the best layout of the roadways and the best layout of the lots. We would occasionally need to revise the Conceptual Master Plan in order to get the best layout. On the proposed version, we realized the oddly loop-shaped road to accommodate reuse of the North Employees Home no longer made sense. We've explored co-housing in greater depth at a better location. We locate the memorial back to the site of the original fountain, which is a centrally located contemplative site with a sense of State Hospital history. We've redesigned Beech Tree Park, and we've explored the possibility of live/work units in the Male Attendants' Building and across from it. If townhouses prove to be popular, there will be more; if the cottages prove to be popular, there will be more of those units. In summary, we've improved the layout to make a more walkable livable village community.

Joseph Blumenthal, CAC: Why can't you preserve the North Employees' Building?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: I distributed a handout of the reasons at the last meeting. It is highly unlikely that another round of tax credits will be granted to rehab this building.

Joseph Blumenthal: There are so few original buildings left; I was hopeful about the North Employees' Building.

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.

Martha Ackelsberg, CAC: Was there ever hope in the original plan of affordable housing at the North Employees' Building?

Beth Murphy: Yes, affordable live/work. The Male Attendants' Building works better as artist live/work at the entrance to the village where it will get more traffic. There is an unchanging level of affordable housing that we will meet.

Martha Ackelsberg: With the bungalows at \$350K or less, I worry about meeting the level of workforce affordable housing, which is \$250K or lower. The Housing Partnership understood those bungalows to be slated for \$250K or less.

Beth Murphy: The figure of \$350K or less goes back to 2009. Bungalows are more affordable in operating cost, especially energy.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: How would the CAC find out the price range for those small-affordable cottages?

Beth Murphy: The Pecoy Company should have a better sense of the cost at your next meeting.

Rutherford Platt, CAC: I see no provision for a community meeting space on your latest Proposed Conceptual Master Plan.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: That has not changed since the last CAC meeting. I remember something previous Mayor Higgins said often: The best community gathering space in

actuality is your post office lobby or local café, a place where neighbors naturally bump into each other.

Rutherford Platt: There needs to be a free space for residents, managed by The Community Builders or whoever manages the office. We have real residents now who need to meet each other somewhere other than at a hypothetical café. Now is the time to bear down on this expectation.

Joseph Blumenthal, CAC: In order for that to happen, the residents themselves need to figure out the way to get together. They need to talk to each other, perhaps after this meeting, exchange phone numbers and email addresses and then plan to meet. It is unrealistic to expect The Community Builders to offer free of charge in perpetuity some kind of public meeting space to anybody who wants to use it. It is much more reasonable to expect a group of property owners to get together, form some kind of association, and arrange to have a common room if they want it. This idea can come to fruition only from the residents, not from the CAC.

Francis Johnson, CAC: The CAC previously approved enthusiastically the increase in density on Village Hill. The drastic reduction in density in the Proposed Conceptual Master Plan from 337 to 251 units is a real change and a problem.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: There is some reduction in density. The Master Plan we've been working from shows 289 units. If townhouses prove very popular, there will be more of them and you will see that 300 number very quickly.

Frandy Johnson: The Conceptual Master Plans shows single family homes replacing townhouses and replacing apartments. And the lots are bigger than those on Olander Drive.

Beth Murphy: That was an easy way to calculate the density cap. We could easily have bungalows take the place of single family homes. Townhouses at Ford Crossing may prove popular. There is only so much visioning we can do. We are not closing out options. We are not closing out density. And as you know, Frandy, all plans come back to the Planning Board for approval.

Martha Ackelsberg: If the Conceptual Plan is so open, why make it look less dense on your graphic? Why pull back from the original vision. Why not start with more houses and more affordable units?

Beth Murphy: That has not been determined yet. We don't know the size or price range of the units yet. It depends on the next developer. Co-housing could prove very popular.

Frandy Johnson: We want you to envision more density.

Harriet Diamond, CAC: The whole city is changing zoning to more density. It seems odd to show less density here, like a special preserve of big houses on big lots in the middle of an increasingly dense neighborhood. This is not in keeping with the prevailing concept of infill.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: We need the ability to try different types of housing and see which prove more popular.

Joseph Blumenthal, CAC: Aren't there more apartments now after 40R was adopted, at the urging of Planning Director Wayne Feiden? Didn't you show more single family homes before?

Beth Murphy: We aren't making a statement about density with this new plan; we simply are testing the market. The plan allows for multiple housing types at various prices.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: What seems different to me is the removal of the road and the non-use of the North Employees' Building. Understanding that the market will drive how dense the housing up there will end up, does removal of that road restrict density in the future in any unfixable way?

Beth Murphy: The road previously had just 8 houses, a waste of a road. Its removal will help density. It allows more variety and diversity of housing according to market demand.

Frandy Johnson, CAC: The road is inconclusive as far as the CAC is concerned. CAC does not vote on road location; the Planning Board does.

Rutherford Platt, CAC: Have you thought of building high, 6 to 8 storeys, to take advantage of the views now blocked by Kollmorgen?

Beth Murphy: 4 storeys is the zoning limit.

Orville Pierson, Moser Street resident: You say the north campus is market driven. If many people in the next year were willing to pay \$800K for a house, would you go that way?

Beth Murphy: It is market driven by the developer. We put out a Request for Proposals and evaluate what we get back. It has to be a high quality developer who meets the goals of the Maser Plan and our standards of energy efficiency. It's not market driven to the highest bidder; it's not that way at all. All the money paid to us by developers is ploughed right back into the project. This is not a money making proposition.

Kathy Lewis, Village Hill Road resident: Was co-housing always part of the plan? Is there market research to support it?

Beth Murphy: Co-housing has been part of the plan since 2009. There is much diversity within the co-housing world. We would like to thoroughly test that concept and see what interest there is.

Marilyn Huffman, Village Hill Road resident: What CAC member Joe Blumenthal said about a residents' association is exactly what we wish to do. We thought that could happen here first. Then we could get someone to step forward for membership on your committee. We aren't looking for anyone to run our association.

Benjamin Spencer, Rust Avenue resident: I now pass around a pad of paper. Any resident who wishes to attend a meeting to form a resident association should leave your contact information. I will book a space at Forbes Library for our first meeting.

Arlene Avakian, Olander Drive resident: A café is not a good place for residents to hold a get-together party and a terrible place for a meeting. Meeting space at co-housing would be sized for those co-housing residents only. If the community space is not on the Conceptual Master Plan, it won't happen.

Kathy Lewis: A prior plan included the community space.

Beth Murphy: There never was a community space on the Master Plan. We can't burden the existing North Association of landowners. Each lot owner pays a fee to maintain the common area.

Ellie Cook, Rust Avenue resident: Where is all the open space promised on the Master Plan?

Beth Murphy: We have added open space to the 2009 amount.

Ellie Cook: There were no houses in the 4 North area before. The beech trees seem crowded out by houses now. Where is the space for people to walk?

Beth Murphy: In 2009 there were. We are creating pocket parks throughout the site.

Rank Demaree, Rust Avenue resident: A pocket park is the size of a tree.

Ellie Cook: Northampton needs another large park. It should be in the center of Village Hill to memorialize what was there before. A pocket park is not a park.

Frandy Johnson, CAC: 75% of the old Northampton State Hospital land remains open space. The flip side is density, which Northampton also needs.

Councilor Paul Spector, CAC: We are hearing calls for more density and also for more open space. How to reconcile these two conflicting needs?

Rank Demaree, Rust Avenue resident: I think there was a big misunderstanding between what many of us took to be plans and what were actually theories, a blank. What besides the bungalows is set in stone?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: MassDevelopment is the master developer for the project. The Conceptual Master Plan is the framework for developing the site. We are in charge of building the site out in phases as we identify developers. We've identified Wright Builders, who have built Morningside and Eastview. We identified the Pecoy Company, who will build 24 cottages. We identified the Aurora Company, who will build bungalows on the south campus. We've put out for proposals the sections for townhouses and multi-family homes and we will identify developers for those. That is how this project works. The next puzzle piece is co-housing, which takes the most lead time to get a developer up and running. The constant throughout is MassDevelopment who ensure that whatever is done is in keeping with the overall concept.

Mayor Narkewicz, CAC chair: Please describe your agency.

Beth Murphy: MassDevelopment is a quasi public company in charge of economic development for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We oversee community development, lending, and bond lending. Our projects are spread across the state and we must allocate resources fairly. We have invested \$20 million and 10 years' time (not including staff time) to date in what we now call Village Hill. We expect to invest another \$8 million through buildout.

Harriet Diamond, CAC: Because of the way in which you changed the road you've opened up the northern circle to more open space. If you were to create more density outside the circle of 13 single family homes, and leave the inside space as open space, then it wouldn't just be people's back yards. People would have smaller yards on that outside circle, but everyone would have that open space available inside the circle. This is just a possibility that would not change any roads or density. Would you lose less money with this version? If it worked, it would make a wonderful plan.

Beth Murphy: I couldn't even begin to entertain that idea because who is to say there is a developer out there with just those needs?

Ellie Cook, Rust Avenue resident: Are all those spaces that are already open, such as the community gardens and the Smith Vocational land, sacrosanct and never to be developed?

Beth Murphy: Yes.

Benjamin Spencer, Rust Avenue resident: You keep talking about residences, but there needs to be commercial development to balance things out. You talk about difficulty in attracting commercial buyers. What's going to make this project work is a street of businesses that attract people. It doesn't have to compete with downtown or Florence. Why is there no place to buy groceries, no coffee shop? I don't understand why this has not happened already. It's been years.

Beth Murphy: We have been marketing the site as actively as we can. We've used brokers.

Benjamin Spencer: How can a location in a city with such renown as Northampton not attract commercial development?

Beth Murphy: Downtown is a proven entity while Village Hill is still a development. Office space and retail space will come but it will be later in the project.

Mayor Narkewicz, CAC chair: I can assure you that every conversation I have with MassDevelopment is about commercial development on Village Hill. After a period of several vacancies Crafts Avenue, just across from City Hall, has undergone a kind of renaissance, with a

new café and a food/wine store. A new office park has broken ground off I91. That is what the market dictated in those locations. We just have to keep marketing Village Hill.

Rutherford Platt, CAC: I'm unclear about the ownership of the North Campus. Once the project is finished will MassDevelopment retain any land, or do you divest it all to homebuyers?

Beth Murphy: MassDevelopment sells the land in phases to pre-qualified developers. We will finish up this project by selling the remaining lots to developers in five years, we hope.

Rutherford Platt, CAC: The rental units will remain with The Community Builders?

Beth Murphy: That is correct.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: I have served on the CAC since the early 1990's. Whether or not you agree with the various visions and conceptualizations, we were very lucky to have MassDevelopment. If the project had been in the hands of a private developer, we would not be as far along. Not insignificant is that the economy collapsed in 2008. The project's vision will be modified by the market. MassDevelopment staffers have been nothing but good listeners. Their willingness to continue losing money on this project is a great opportunity for our city.

Joseph Blumenthal, CAC: I move that the CAC endorse the Proposed Conceptual Master Plan as presented tonight.

Bruce Fogel, Esq., CAC: I second the motion.

Councilor Paul Spector, CAC: The public will be able to make their feelings known when the Master Plan goes before the Planning Board.

Benjamin Spencer, Rust Avenue resident: I've attended meetings for a number of years, also, especially during the permitting of development on the South Campus. With the relocation of Kollmorgen to Village Hill the Planning Board made it clear that it was not their purview to second guess the CAC. The decisions that get made here are the decisions that move this project forward. In order to attend these meetings I must leave work early and secure childcare. I am here because I care about my neighborhood, not to criticize the developer.

Martha Ackelsberg, CAC: Although nothing is written in stone, this latest Conceptual Master Plan exists only as a drawing on this piece of paper. Affordable units there seem uncertain.

Bruce Fogel, Esq.: It is definitely different, but it has not changed. What MassDevelopment is trying to do, with CAC overseeing, is how to best market the project, since the prior iteration wasn't selling. It could change tomorrow, it could change in a year, market depending. What we're endorsing is not that specific picture. What we all want is for this project to move forward to completion in the most efficient way.

Martha Ackelsberg: But if the CAC is not being asked to endorse this particular picture, why are we being shown the picture and asked to vote?

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: People need a sense of possibilities. A blank is not good for marketing. There has to be a public face to the project and this drawing is our best approximation.

Frandy Johnson, CAC: I will vote against this if the 10,000 square foot lots remain.

Harriet Diamond, CAC: What we want as a group is not being met. This is a picture, not even binding. Why show such large single-family homes? Why not represent what we want?

Lengthy discussion of what should be contained in the graphic depicting Conceptual Master Plan.

Joseph Blumenthal, CAC: Beth Murphy is the professional and I'm sure she understands the best way to market this.

Beth Murphy: You are saying nothing about density. It is simply a vote of support to go forward and use this latest Conceptual Master Plan as the public face of the project.

VOTE ON MOTION:

The Citizens' Advisory Committee hereby endorses the Conceptual Master Plan dated 11/4/2011 to replace the one dated 12/9/2009.

**Moved by Joseph Blumenthal
Seconded by Bruce Fogel, Esq.**

6 Yes:

Mayor David Narkewicz	Councilor Paul Spector	Joseph Blumenthal
Bruce Fogel, Esq.	Rutherford Platt	

3 No:

Martha Ackelsberg	Harriet Diamond	Frandy Johnson
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1 Abstain:

Christopher Zabik

6. Update on Fountain Memorial Subcommittee

Joseph Blumenthal, CAC: Committee is very small at the moment: my wife, Barbara Blumenthal, and myself, Jackie Duda, Tom Riddell and his student, Sarah McDonald.

- We are very happy about the change of location of the memorial back to the original site of the fountain;
- We are making plans to go before the Community Preservation Committee for funding assistance;
- We've been in touch with the foundry to restore the fountain;
- City will transfer the fountain from its storage spot at the DPW; and
- We are seeking more volunteers.

Beth Murphy, MassDevelopment: Site will be ready in the fall.

Jackie Duda, Fountain Committee: We have been waiting this long, having been told the original location would not work. To hear now that the original fountain location will be available for the memorial in the fall is wonderful news.

7. Update on CAC membership

A motion to expand the membership of the Citizens' Advisory Committee to include a resident of the North Campus, subject to that person being nominated by those living on the North Campus, was approved unanimously.

Mayor Narkewicz needs to verify what the State approval process for this addition will be.

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Corinne Philippides
Mayoral Aide
March 27, 2012*