

***Affordable housing proposal draws concerns - another project for affordable homes may be in the offing as well*** ManchesterJournal.com - Friday, April 06 - Brandon Canevari, Editor

MANCHESTER - An affordable housing project proposed by Joshua and Linda Wien has attracted concern from neighbors Robert and Sally Treat who - with their attorney, Mary Ashcroft, present - discussed several issues with the proposal at the last Planning Commission meeting on March 26.

Planning Director and Zoning Administrator, Lee Krohn, said the Treats addressed issues regarding curb cuts, traffic flow, risk to animals, the effect on life in the Batten Kill and fencing surrounding the project.

Robert Treat said that among their many concerns, the largest were animals and the flow of traffic. "Probably of the two the traffic is of the most concern, because people can get hurt there. If somebody pulls out they're going to be right on top of each other so that was a big concern," said Robert Treat in a telephone interview. "That's probably the biggest one as far as human health was concerned."

The Wiens have proposed constructing a 20-unit housing project on a 6.28 acre parcel of property they own adjacent to the Treat's property along Routes 11 and 30. Twelve of the 20 units are intended to be priced as "affordable housing," a relative rarity in Manchester housing development projects.

Robert Treat said he expected that approximately 40 more cars will be entering and exiting that area, causing the flow of traffic to become more congested and dangerous. Electric fencing is another major concern because children could grab it, he said.

Ashcroft was hired to ensure that an agreement was reached regarding the Treats' rights, he said. "The Wiens may not stay there forever and if people come in we want to know what's going to happen in the future," he said.

For example, if children were to begin throwing things over the fence or possibly destroying property - accidentally or intentionally - Robert Treat said he wanted to make sure there was a written agreement stipulating that such problems would be addressed on an annual basis.

Despite the concerns the Treats have expressed, both Treat and Joshua Wien said they hope the issues are resolved satisfactorily.

While the Wiens' proposed affordable housing development is the first in Manchester that would allow people to own the homes, another developer, Herb Donner, is also looking to create affordable housing for occupation by home owners on property he owns off Riverside Heights behind the Real Sports building. Before any construction begins, Donner must receive approval to demolish a vacant home on the site.

"We have a preliminary application in hand [and] I expect to have the formal one any day now," said Krohn.

While it has yet to be determined how many units he can construct, the estimate is three or four. Donner said he has been speaking with Ed Bove about creating these affordable housing units.

"I know Herb and I have spoken and we both think it's a good idea to get some affordable units in there," Bove said. "Herb and I have been going over what's affordable and what's not."

Once Donner completes all the necessary steps in permitting and funding, then Bove can begin putting together additional funding and looking for buyers.

Although plans for units are still in the early stages, Donner hopes to break ground soon.

"I'm not sure how long the Manchester Planning Board procedure takes, but ideally I would like to start sometime this late spring early summer and completion by the fall," he said.