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Via Email: alove@franklinma.gov

Planning Board
Town of Franklin
355 East Central Street
Franklin, MA 02038
Attn: Amy Love, Town Planner

RE: 488 & 496 Summer Street
Response to DPCD Memo of 5/14/24

Dear Board:

The applicant is providing this response to the comments from the Department of Planning and Community Development offered through its Memorandum dated May 14, 2024. The applicant will only specify those items that require a response.

General:

Item #5: Applicant still needs to file with Conservation Commission

Response: No work is being proposed within the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission so the applicant does not need to file with the Conservation Commission.

Comments from February 26, 2024 meeting:

Bullet #1: Special Permit questions a-g should be revised to provide more information

Response: The “Supporting Statement for Special Permit” contains the additional detail sought by the DPCD. The applicant will satisfy each of the requirements via the hearing process as a whole and not solely on the submission of said supporting statement.

Bullet #8: How is this beneficial to approve 44 units when 19 are allowed. The applicant to realistically provide the reasons why this development is happening.

Response: The applicant objects to this comment from the DPCD, as the number of senior village units available is based on the mathematical formula set out in the Senior Village Overlay District bylaw. Merely because the proposed number of units exceeds 19 does not mean the proposed Senior Village is not beneficial to the town. Nevertheless, the applicant responds, as stated in said supporting statement item (1) – that the Town of Franklin spent a great deal of time and money to update its Master Plan and the 2022 Housing Production Plan through November 2023, which set forth the Town’s top 3 goals as:

- 1) Maintain Franklin’s Subsidized Housing Inventory above ten percent through 2030 and beyond.
- 2) Increase the number of housing units affordable to Franklin’s very low-income, low-income, and moderate-income residents.
- 3) Increase the number of affordable housing units available to persons with special needs, and the elderly.

This application addresses each of the Town’s top 3 goals from the Town’s most current Housing Production Plan. Additional housing will be necessary to continue to work to meeting these goals, but his application is a good start. So the proposed 40 units, although more than the bylaw baseline, represents only a fraction of the housing required to meet these stated goals. Further, Governor Maura Healey has proposed The Affordable Homes Act, which maintains as stated by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities website, “Housing in Massachusetts has become too expensive. For decades, the production of new homes hasn’t kept pace with demand. Today, the number of homes for rent or sale is at an all-time low.” As recently as May 22, 2024 the Metropolitan Area Planning Council posted on its website:

Almost every week, a news article is published that highlights the magnitude of the housing crisis in Massachusetts. Just last month, the New York Times highlighted one phenomenon that planners across Massachusetts hear every day in our communities. Aging residents want to downsize their homes, but they cannot find a new, smaller home that fits their price range and unique needs. Many would love to find a small home in their same community, with minimal maintenance required, and only one level to help with their aging mobility needs.

Comments from DPCD still not addressed:

Bullet #1: Applicant should also provide verification that DHCD will accept the 7 affordable units to be counted towards the Town of Franklin’s total affordable units.

Response: This request of the applicant is not a requirement of the Senior Village Overlay District bylaw. However, the applicant has contacted the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (the “EOHLC” - formerly known as the Department of Housing and Community Development or DHCD) concerning the nine (9) proposed affordable housing units and it is the EOHLC policy that such units are not accepted as affordable housing units. A copy of the EOHLC policy is attached for your reference.

Bullet #2: Applicant has applied for Inclusionary Zoning. The Senior Overlay District already requires 15% affordable housing, therefore, the Inclusionary Zoning does not apply. If it were to apply, then Senior housing Overlay District plus Inclusionary Zoning would then require the applicant to provide 25% affordable housing.

Response: The applicant wanted to proceed conservatively and include the Inclusionary Zoning application as part of the process. However, the applicant agrees with the DPCD that the Inclusionary Zoning is not required on top of the Senior Village Overlay District. Please note that the bylaw allows a maximum of 95 units based on the lot size and the applicant is only proposing 40 units, which represents only 42% of the maximum density allowed.

Bullet #5: Applicant should provide detailed information how the increase from 19 units to 44 units meets the bylaw criteria.

Response: The implication of this request is that a presumption exists that more than 19 units to not meet the bylaw criteria. However, the bylaw criteria create no such presumption. It is important to recognize that the bylaw does not link the number of units with the design of the proposed senior village. The number of proposed units is merely a mathematical function applying the density and bonus allocations outlined in the bylaw. As for the design of the proposed senior village the applicant is providing additional deed-restricted affordable housing for seniors while preserving open space in a village of New England character with a sense of neighborhood. The proposed senior village is landscape sensitive by the optimal use of some dramatic elevation differences. The proposed senior village has been designed in accordance with the standards and requirements established by the senior village bylaw. Further, the proposed senior village preserves open space for both conservation and recreation, protects existing natural features of the site, and creates a lovely senior village with a common green to promote pedestrian interaction and enhance the sense of community.

All of the other comments have been addressed by the recently submitted revised plan set and/or the letter from Legacy Engineering of July 24, 2024.

Respectfully,

Edward V. Cannon, Jr.

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cc: Tim Jones
Dan Merrikin, Legacy Engineering

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