

BOROUGH OF EDGEWOOD
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CALL TO ORDER

President Wainright called the meeting of the Borough of Edgewood to order at 7:00 pm. The public meeting was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following responded: Mr. Bright, Mr. Fuller, Mr. Love, Mr. O'Donnell, Dr. Petrolla, Ms. Yaney, Mr. Wainright, and Mayor Wilson. Solicitor Barry was also present.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Wainright asked for public comment on the proposed zoning ordinance amendment; Ordinance 1070.

Victor Rodriguez of A.M. Rodriguez Associates gave a brief presentation to those in attendance regarding his proposed development on Parcel D-3.

Mr. Fuller asked what age limits would be placed on residents. Mr. Rodriguez responded 62 and older. Mr. Fuller asked whether the proposed property would always be senior living. Mr. Rodriguez responded that the property would remain a senior living facility for at least 30 years because that is a condition of their financing.

Valerie Anese of 105 Hawthorne Street asked if this is complete independent living, Mr. Rodriguez responded it was. She asked what the occupancy of the 1 & 2 bedroom units would be, Mr. Rodriguez responded they typically do not have more than two people per unit. She asked if this was a green built building, Mr. Rodriguez responded that the building would be built to Passive House standards which exceed the LEED building rating system requirements for indoor air quality and building envelope efficiency. Ms. Anese asked if this would be the only building constructed in Edgewood. Mr. Rodriguez replied that he only intended to build one facility but might look into the vacant neighboring parcel but it wasn't his initial intent.

Agnes Lesko of 199 Dewey Street asked why Mr. Rodriguez picked Edgewood. Mr. Rodriguez responded that his father, who is now 84, had been looking at redeveloping shopping centers which were declining due to the evolving nature of retail. This is the first time they are looking at developing adjacent to a shopping center, and Edgewood has all of the components they're looking for. She expressed concern over seniors walking through Edgewood Towne Centre but Mr. Rodriguez stated that his development provides a shuttle which they could use as an alternative to walking. She asked how financing works. Mr. Rodriguez stated he receives tax credits for constructing the building which he can sell to a bank. She asked if this was Section 8 housing, Mr. Rodriguez stated it was not.

Solicitor Barry stated that this ordinance would allow for the construction of this facility as a conditional use. Any applicant would have to have another hearing before council approving their land development application. Council is not considering any type of approval at this time besides the zoning amendment. Solicitor Barry also remarked that as part of the conditional use approval he recommends council require evidence that the applicant is complying with all environmental standards established by other agencies relevant to the remediation of the site.

Kate Lockett 136 W. Swissvale Avenue stated she was told 85% of the applicants would be receiving governmental assistance. How does is this not Section 8 housing? Mr. Rodriguez responded that he did not know what information she was referring to or where she heard this from and that he couldn't respond. Ms. Lockett responded that she was reading a flier she was handed encouraging her to be on this call that stated "they have stated that 85% of the occupants will be receiving government assistance." She asked if he stated this. Again, Mr. Rodriguez responded that he has not. Any assistance he receives is to fund the construction of the project in the form of tax credits. She again asked if that was the 85% that the flier refers to. Mr. Rodriguez said that it may refer to the number of affordable rate units in the property, but it's not referring to government rental assistance. The subsidy he receives for building the property reduces the size of his mortgage which allows him to charge more affordable rents. He doesn't receive rental subsidies.

Mr. O'Donnell asked Mr. Rodriguez to explain affordable rent. Mr. Rodriguez stated that affordable rent is based on the area median income. their rents are approximately 50-60% of the area median income. There are a few units that rent for 30% of the area median income but these are handicap accessible units. Mr. O'Donnell then asked Mr. Rodriguez to confirm that the rents are set based on the area median income and not that the residents receive a check from the government to pay their rents. Mr. Rodriguez confirmed that rents are set based on area median income and no subsidies are used.

Mr. Zahorchak read the following comments received via email:

I am writing in support of the proposed zoning of Edgewood Town Center for affordable housing units. This would be a wonderful use of the abundance of empty space there, and a great location for potential tenants. Access to grocery, medical professionals, and a nearby busway would make this a prime location for residents.

Not only that, but the presence of more residents in that area may boost the struggling businesses in that center. As a resident of Point Breeze for the past 5 years I have watched the main plaza where I do my shopping rotate stores and have frequent vacancies.

Please do the right thing here and make use of an underutilized space in a positive manner.

Sincerely,
Monica Counihan
410 East End Avenue

In reference to the change in zoning laws of Edgewood Borough for the purpose of building multi family dwellings.

We are very concerned that this change to of Edgewood's zoning laws will change the character of our charming, quiet, mostly single family home, community.

Large multi family dwellings will add to traffic issues, noise pollution and air pollution. There will also be a loss of privacy to any neighbors who will be dwelling next to the proposed new buildings.

We are also concerned with protecting the current property values in the Edgewood community.

Regards

Donald Csellar and Jennifer Csellar

<No address given>

I am writing in favor of re-zoning and redeveloping the Edgewood Town Center for senior housing. My understanding is there is a meeting tonight to vote on this re-zoning, and I would like to contribute my public comment in support of it.

I also received a flyer warning of a connection between re-zoning the Town Center for senior housing and making it possible for affordable housing to be built on the site with the same zoning in the future. While the flyer posed this in a negative light, I wholeheartedly support affordable housing in our region and in Edgewood specifically.

As an Edgewood resident, can my comments be taken into account in re-zoning the Edgewood Town Center property, in support of future housing projects for this area?

Thank you,
Anne Hong
W Hutchinson Ave

Mr. Fuller stated that Section 8 no longer exists due to the negative stereotypes that it conjured. Ms. Lesko asked what exists in its place? Mr. Fuller stated that there is a program that exists providing vouchers but he does not want this associated with the Section 8 program.

Ms. Luckett said this is all semantics, if the residents are not going to be receiving aid and assistance with their rent, and are full paying customers so to speak, then that's a different situation than having people come in who are not self-sufficient.

Ms. Annese, claiming to have 35 years of experience in housing development and construction, stated she felt this group is confusing affordable housing with government assisted housing. Affordable housing is how a developer ties rents to the household income of a particular area. This is not government subsidized housing. Many seniors over the age of 62 are borderline poor or very financially limited. This is affordable housing based on area median income and not government voucher or subsidized housing.

Mr. Wainright asked Mr. Rodriguez what the monthly rent would be and he replied that it would be approximately \$650-\$1000 per month, but market rate could be more.

Barbara DaLee of 708 Walnut Street said she was a landlord for 35 years and asked if background and credit checks would be conducted on potential renters. Mr. Rodriguez stated that all potential renters are subject to background and credit checks. Congregant Management Services manages the facility and conducts the background checks. They are a separate, privately owned company from A.M. Rodriguez Associates. Ms. DaLee thanked Mr. Rodriguez for his answers.

M-1 Mr. O'Donnell moved to adjourn at 7:27 pm. Second by Mr. Love.

DISCUSSION: None

The aye vote on the motion was unanimous. **Motion carried.**

Rob Zahorchak, Borough Manager