

## Town of Winchester – Waterfield Lot RFP

### Responses to Comments on Draft RFP

*Prepared by JM Goldson LLC 6/16/2020*

The Town of Winchester held a virtual meeting on Zoom on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to share an update on the procurement process for the redevelopment of the Waterfield Lot. Several community members participated in the meeting and offered feedback on the scale of the project, design of the site and parking, and the review process for the development proposals. Additional comments and questions were submitted by email, and were subsequently discussed by the working group that has collaborated on the draft RFP document. The Select Board also met on Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup> to provide final guidance on the RFP. The following is a summary of the comments and questions received, and responses from the working group, which consists of local residents, Town board and committee members, and Town staff. The RFP will be revised as indicated below and is anticipated to be released to pre-qualified developers on Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

## Community Feedback

**Rangeley Neighborhood Association:** asked about the process for coordinating with the neighborhood, whether slides will be posted after the public meeting, and whether a member of their group can be part of the review committee.

**Response:** community members, particularly residents and business owners directly abutting the Waterfield Lot, will have the opportunity to review RFP submissions, provide input to the Select Board, and provide other feedback during the selection process, including a public meeting in September or October. Slides from the meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup> are available at the following link: <https://www.winchester.us/546/Waterfield-RFQ> . Regarding the review committee, the Select Board has opted to lead the evaluation process themselves, with support from Town Staff, and anticipates selecting up to four finalists to be interviewed.

**Diab Jerius, Planning Board:** submitted corrections to the draft document, including the identification of inconsistent language about the submission format.

**Response:** all corrections have been incorporated into the document. The submission requirements have been updated to require ten hard copies and a USB drive with electronic copy of the submission (electronic submission by Dropbox is no longer being considered).

**Maureen Meister, Planning Board:** expressed concerns about the design review process, permitting, and the requirement that 10% of the housing units include three bedrooms. More information was requested on who is involved with reviewing, at what stage the community can provide input, and whether the three-bedroom requirement can be eliminated.

**Response:**

- An outside design consultant will be hired and is expected to be ready to begin working with the selected developer team once the final selection is made.
- The permitting process will depend on the development proposal, but it is anticipated that Developers will not pursue a Comprehensive Permit (40B) and will work within the existing CBD zoning and Town Common PUD bylaws that are applicable to a residential development on the Waterfield Lot, likely applying for a Special Permit for dimensional relief.
- The three-bedroom requirement in the RFP is based on the Interagency Agreement Regarding Housing Opportunities for Families with Children, which was established in January 2014 by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP), MassHousing, MassDevelopment, and the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC). This agreement stipulates that housing developments funded, assisted, or approved by a State Housing Agency shall have three (3) or more bedrooms in at least ten (10) percent of the housing units. There are some instances where this policy may not apply, including:
  - “Age-restricted housing, assisted living, supportive housing for individuals, single room occupancy, or other developments in which the policy is not appropriate for the intended residents.”
  - Locations where market demand for these units is lacking (as determined by the applicable agency)
  - Situations where the requirement might render the project infeasible (as determined by the applicable agency)

In addition, excluding three-bedroom units from the proposed development represents a potential Fair Housing violation, as it discriminates against families. In order to provide more diverse housing opportunities in Winchester, the existing language in the RFP related to three-bedroom units will be maintained.

**Jamie Devol – resident:** expressed concerns about the size of the building due to the number of units and parking; questioned the level of affordability and area median income.

**Response:** Evaluation criteria have been developed that prioritize a high proportion of affordability to a range of income levels and require details on the site and building design. There are no requirements for a specific number of housing units or parking spaces. It is anticipated that the proposals will include a range of options, some of which will be smaller and include less parking. The FY 2020 HUD 80% Area Median Income

limit for a 4-person household in the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH Area is \$96,250.

**Additional comments submitted by Maureen Meister:**

- *A lot of statements in the RFP refer to "the town." The reader can't tell who that is: The committee that has been meeting? Or the Select Board? Or who?*

**Response:** Because the Waterfield Lot is owned by the Town of Winchester, it is standard practice for the RFP to refer to the municipality in this fashion. In the case of this RFP, the Town is represented by the Select Board and members of the working group involved in the development of the document.

- *On the RFP, please identify everyone on the steering committee that has been meeting. I don't know whether it has a name. I also didn't know who they were when I attended the Wednesday night meeting. The names of citizen volunteers should be identified as such. The names of participating staff and consultants should be identified with their positions.*

**Response:** Requests for Proposals do not generally list the names of individuals involved in the development of the document. The working group included the following:

Lisa Wong, Town Manager  
Brian Szekely, Town Planner  
Beth Rudolph, Town Engineer  
Michael Bettencourt, Select Board  
Jacqueline Welch, Select Board  
Heather Hannon, Planning Board  
Jack Lemenager, Historical Commission  
John Suhrbier, Housing Partnership  
Marty Jones, Former President & CEO of MassDevelopment  
Neighborhood resident (requested not to be identified), Architect

In addition, Francis Goyes Flor of MassHousing and Jenn Goldson and Barry Fradkin of JM Goldson helped to facilitate the discussion and develop the RFP document. Margaret White, Special Projects Engineer, provided additional feedback on Ch 30B requirements.

- *On page 5, the RFP calls for 10 percent of the units to be three bedrooms. Rather the RFP should promote one and two bedroom units. Building three-bedroom units will undermine the RFP's other objectives: i.e., to provide some parking spaces to support our fragile local retail businesses; to limit the amount of parking on the site overall; and to respect the scale of the town center.*

**Response:** Please refer to the response above about the three-bedroom requirement. As many as eight proposals may be submitted for the site, which will provide a range of

options related to total units, bedrooms, parking, and the scale of the building. The evaluation process will consider all of these factors with respect to how they address the defined objectives.

- *I note on page 7 there is mention of a Selection Committee. Who sits on the Selection Committee? The members should be identified by name in the RFP. The applicants and Winchester residents should know exactly who is making this extremely important decision.*

**Response:** The Select Board will lead the evaluation process with the support of Town Staff. No Selection Committee will be established.

- *Regarding the Selection Process, am I correct that the Select Board will have the final say? If so, the Planning Board should have an opportunity for meaningful input that's more than just being invited to Zoom in to a hearing.*

**Response:** Yes, the Select Board will select the final developer based on the evaluation criteria and interview process. The Planning Board will have the opportunity to comment on the submissions and submit comments and questions to the Select Board before and after the interview process.

- *In order to get a decent outcome in terms of how the project looks, there will need to be early and meaningful input from the advisory boards--meaning the Design Review Committee and Historical Commission as well as the Planning Board if the project is permitted by the ZBA.*

**Response:** An outside design consultant will be hired and is expected to be ready to begin working with the selected developer team once the final selection is made and throughout the pre-development process. They will be tasked with coordinating with the development team and relevant Town boards and committees to address concerns about the proposed design of the building and site.