

David K. Stone

From: Allison Hammer [allison.hammer@verizon.net]
Sent: Monday, July 11, 2005 10:24 PM
To: Fincom@acton-ma.gov
Subject: Willow/Central Street development

Dear Finance Committee Members,

My husband, daughter and I have lived in the house at 21 Willow Street in West Acton for the past 5 years. During the past year, we have been meeting with people from ACHC regarding the potential development of the property across the street. Our biggest concern is the type of house(s) that are built. Specifically, we are very hopeful that the size of the house(s) will not be so big as to be out of place in our neighborhood or to overpower the houses around it. We realize that it could be financially attractive for the town to have developers build bigger houses that will sell for more money. However, bigger is not always better. A large house or several large townhouses would be out of place in our neighborhood and would detract from the village of West Acton. We were very interested in the ideas presented by ACHC about developing a farmhouse style 2-family house on the Central St. side and a bungalow style house on the Willow St. side of the lot. A lot of thought and discussion went into these choices, including from the people who live in the neighborhood. I do hope that as the members of the Finance Committee make their decision on how to proceed with the property, you take into consideration our concerns. We really want the best for our neighborhood and Acton. Unfortunately, we are unable to attend the meeting tomorrow night regarding the property. I would be happy to discuss this with you further.

Thank you very much.
Allison Hammer
21 Willow Street
978-264-3182

David K. Stone

From: Pamela Cochrane [pamelacochrane@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2005 7:18 AM
To: David K. Stone
Subject: Willow/Central Street Property

To Members of the Acton FinCom, the Board of Selectmen, and Members of the Planning Board:

I am a long-time resident at 198 Central Street writing with regard to the property on Central and Willow Streets which are to be discussed at tonight's FinCom meeting.

I very much support increasing the stock of affordable housing in Acton and strongly support the ACHC in their proposal for use of the Willow/Central Street land for such housing. As Acton works to meet affordable housing needs, it is important to take care regarding the type of development that takes place.

I have attended ACHC meetings regarding the Willow/Central Street property and have been very impressed by their concern for developing the property in a way that fits into the neighborhood and also provides affordable housing in Acton. They have worked extremely well with the neighbors and have also worked with an architect who has taken care in observing the surrounding houses and village environment as he develops a proposal for housing.

I urge you to place a higher value on the type of development that takes place in Acton than on the more immediate choice to sell the land for the highest possible price.

In brief, I urge you to support the ACHC plan by agreeing to sell the land to them for the price they can afford.

Pamela Cochrane
198 Central Street
Acton, MA 01720

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<http://auctions.yahoo.com/>

David K. Stone

From: Philip Scarbro [pscarbros@efi.org]
Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2005 11:15 AM
To: Fincom@acton-ma.gov
Subject: 28 Willow / 214 Central Property

Dear Finance Committee Members,

I live at 21 Willow Street, living directly across the street from the 28 Willow Street / 214 Central Street property. My understanding is the Finance Committee will be meeting this evening with Acton Community Housing Corporation to discuss this property. I regret that my wife, daughter, and I have another commitment and are unable to attend. That is not, however, a reflection of our lack of interest in this project. We are extremely interested in how the town proceeds with this property, and wish we could attend tonight's meeting. I will offer my comments by email.

I want to express our strong support for ACHC, the process they have adopted relating to this property, and the architectural plans they have proposed. Frankly, ACHC has done an exceptional job thus far with this project, soliciting input from neighbors and stimulating healthy discussion. Many of the suggestions resulting from those discussions were incorporated into ACHC's comments during Town Meeting and reflected in the architect's proposed design. Affordable housing should not result in dense developments, large buildings, or cookie-cutter homes. Homes should be consistent in design and size with the neighborhood so that they contribute to, rather than detract from, the character of the town and abutting property values. Through the use of energy efficient design these homes should not just be affordable to purchase, but affordable to live in. The proposed ACHC two-family farmhouse-style home on Central Street and single family bungalow-style home on Willow Street successfully achieve all of this extremely well.

It is often the case that when a developer focuses on maximizing their return on their development, when a town focuses on maximizing its tax revenues, or when affordable housing advocates try to maximize the number of units, developments become contentious. There is no excuse for any of this to materialize with regard to this project, given that the town has control of the land and ACHC has already proposed a plan that has effectively sacrificed units in exchange for neighborhood and community support.

The ACHC proposal presents a unique opportunity to do it right. These homes would demonstrate how affordable housing ought to be done, not just in Acton but statewide. By facilitating the ACHC proposal the Finance Committee would be supporting a project that could very well become a model for other communities in Massachusetts and other states to emulate. A feather in the town's cap.

If the Finance Committee instead feels it is necessary to simply maximize economic value from the property we will all lose. At a selling price of \$175,000 (which ACHC has indicated it has available) the town would both cover the remediation costs already invested in the property, add to the town's coffers, and add to Acton's tax base. Selling the property to the highest bidder would provide a bit more money and tax revenues, but would likely result in a commercial development or large multifamily development. Neither of these would be good for the nearby residential property values, the character of the town of Acton, the town's interest in stimulating appropriate affordable housing, and there would likely be neighborhood opposition to these types of developments.

I believe that the Finance Committee has also asked for input relating to the development of a playground or a single family home. Both would be more favorable than a commercial or multifamily develop, but the property seems too close to the homes on either side to make a playground an appropriate use of the land (though I have a 6 year old daughter who would love it). A single family home would also enhance the neighborhood, as well as providing the town with tax revenue - but the challenge would be to insure that the developer purchasing the land actually does that, rather than trying to squeeze as many market-rate units onto the land as possible - which might be hard to guarantee. If the town is seriously interested in increasing "green space" (good for the town and the neighborhood,

and something that we should do more of), a neighborhood park could achieve this more appropriately than could a playground, but unlike in communities such as Lexington and Newton where this is more common, neighborhood parks would probably be a harder sell town-wide than ACHC's proposal.

In any case I could write much more in an effort to help the Finance Committee recognize the importance of facilitating appropriate development for the Willow Street/Central Street property, but I've outlined my opinions and there will undoubtedly be others more eloquent than I in attendance at this evening's meeting.

I strongly encourage the Finance Committee to become an advocate and facilitator for ACHC's proposed plan, rather than an obstacle. While I'm unable to attend tonight's meeting, I am more than willing to offer whatever additional input or advice would be helpful.

Thank you for your ongoing work on behalf of the town. Have a good meeting.

Philip Scarbro
21 Willow Street
Acton, MA
978-264-3182 (h)
p.scarbro@verizon.net (h)
508-870-2277 x435 (o)
pscarbro@efi.org (o)

David K. Stone

From: David Cochrane [david.cochrane@tufts.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2005 12:59 PM
To: fincom@acton-ma.gov
Subject: ACHC affordable housing on Willow/Central streets

To: Acton's Finance Committee

I am writing in regard to the Acton Community Housing Corporation's (ACHC) proposal to build affordable housing on the Town owned parcel between Willow and Central streets in West Acton.

I have lived at 198 Central Street since 1976. I have attended the ACHC's neighborhood meetings regarding their proposal and strongly support it. ACHC has listened closely to the neighborhood's concerns and suggestions. Its architect has designed houses that fit very well with the existing architectural elements of the neighborhood thereby helping to preserve the 'village atmosphere' of West Acton. Acton clearly needs to increase its stock of affordable housing. But it should do so in a manner that is consistent with Acton's Master Plan goal of maintaining village environments.

I urge you to support ACHC's plan by selling to them the Willow/Central Street parcel at a price they can afford rather than selling it for the highest possible price.

David E. Cochrane
198 Central Street