

CITY COUNCIL E-MAILS

Received: February 2, 2023 (after 9:00 a.m.) – February 6, 2023 (before 5:00 p.m.)

February 6, 2023 Council Meeting

ADDENDUM

Submitted on Thu, 02/02/2023 - 18:00

Full Name

Nancy Severn

Email

nbsevern@gmail.com

Subject

Sherburne School Proposed Housing Project

Address

347 Sherburne Road

Message

We attended the 1/31/23 neighborhood meeting at Sherburne/Lister School, but I did not get a chance to ask this question: is the groundwater study (Former Pease Air Force Base PFAS Remedial Investigation) still ongoing? In walks around the neighborhood I have chatted with employees of the Cook Company, hired by the Air Force to take samples from metal pipes all over and around the area. There are two of these sampling pipes sticking up out of the corner lawn at Sherburne School. I last saw a Cook Co. technician taking samples there last fall. They don't seem to sample in winter. According to the paperwork the tech shared with me, this project was supposed to be completed by 2023. Has the Pease Group been contacted/consulted about the study and specifically the feasibility of any future construction in that area? Thank you for any information.

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Response from City Manager Conard:

Good afternoon Ms. Severn, Honorable Mayor and City Council Members –

Thank you for your email, and for the opportunity to provide information. This study is party of the Air Force's regulatory requirements in response to the PFAS contamination at Pease. They have many monitoring wells throughout Pease, the contaminated areas and the overall aquifer. The recent work in the Sherburne area is part of their ongoing remedial investigation. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) has a summary at this website:

<https://www.pfas.des.nh.gov/pfas-occurrences/pease-air-force-base>

Should you have additional or follow up questions, I will do my best to answer them.

Regards,

Karen Conard

City Manager

Submitted on Sat, 02/04/2023 - 18:29

Full Name

Kristin Logue

Email

loguekristin40@gmail.com

Subject

Many questions

Address

536 Middle Road

Message

1) I didn't get a response to my last email regarding communications from the Energy Advisory Committee. Never got the postcard for the survey, I got last years communication too late. Never got an answer to my question.

2) Does Portsmouth really recycle? I've seen both going into the same truck, not recently, but in the past and I'm ok with that except, do you know how much water it takes to clean out a peanut butter jar, a jam jar, a pea soup can? At Portsmouth water prices!!! I love the DPW. They are my favorite department. I hate property taxes but love having my streets plowed and my trash picked up.

3) Re: Sherburne School reuse: Why the rush? Does someone need it on their resume? Why not let the land use boards decide what's best for this property? They decide if a resident can have a shed next to their property line, decide if a homeowner can have chickens, if a child

can have a tree house. This is an apartment complex. It was also insulting to property owners who have worked hard to buy homes, maybe not in the posh south end, maybe near a highway or fishstick factory, that you need to have family wealth or an inheritance to be able to live in the city. Since when do people have to live in the town they work? Since when are kids entitle to live in the town they were raised in?

That's about 7 questions. Maybe some answers.

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Mon, 02/06/2023 - 12:15

Full Name

Aodhan MacEinri

Email

urokidd@yahoo.com

Subject

Sherburne Rd Proposal

Address

7 Victory Rd

Message

Honorable Mayor Deaglán McEachern and Council Members

I would like to preface my remarks by stating I am a supporter of sensible development in our city. Having volunteered and advised the previous president of a non-profit affordable housing initiative in Concord for over 12 years, I am critically aware of the lack of affordable housing in the State, let alone Portsmouth. It has been and will continue to be an issue for generations, and I applaud a focus on developing affordable housing units. I do not believe most residents in Pannaway are against affordable housing but would welcome affordable housing in the general Portsmouth area.

There are several issues with this proposed project. First and foremost, it is overly intensive in relation to adjacent properties. A 50-foot tall, four-story building with 85% lot coverage is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, any site development should be characteristic of the neighborhood and provide value to the area and its residents.

I would like to address some points made in the January 12 working session.

1. Respondents to the PHA survey agreed that moderate-income housing was required more than any other. However, I have heard the terms workforce, low-income, and specialized housing, and as a resident, I would like to know precisely what type of housing is being proposed, the site plan, the design, and the expected traffic volume. Additionally, will it be an NH-based construction company providing construction services to keep jobs in NH or an out-of-state company?
2. Everyone in the neighborhood understands that the highway noise is untenable, and many of us would not like to see any further development that does not account for noise abatement. If the sound barrier is ever erected alongside Panaway, the new development will suffer from increased noise levels due to sound reverberation back across the highway. Given the proposed site plan, that will create a noise tunnel between the buildings on the lower field. It is scientifically proven that trees and berms do not absorb enough sound for abatement; they can create more sound due to wavelength reflection. In addition, another housing development along the highway will subject any residents to increased pollution. Petrol and diesel engines emit pollutants such as carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter (PM), sulfur dioxide (SO2), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that contribute to poor urban air quality, and increase health concerns. The DOTs plan to open the breakdown lane to additional traffic, raising more concerns about health standards and noise levels for any housing development at Sherburne.
3. It was stated at the Council meeting of January 12 that the proposed development at Sherburne would be within walking distance of large employers. This is only somewhat true. It may be within walking distance of High Liner Foods or other businesses on Borthwick, but not everyone will be working there.
 - A. Walking downtown or to Lonza from this location takes an hour, so it is not feasible for any low-income resident. Additionally, there is no walking path in some areas of Borthwick, making it difficult for anyone walking or suffering from a disability to move around safely.
 - B. Typically, only 22% of low-income residents have a car. If you are a low-income individual, you may not work a typical 9-5 day, so the council must be cognizant of workers on second and third shifts and their transportation needs.
 - C. There is a lack of cohesive public transportation in the city, with limited connections that stop at 8 pm, and weekend schedules are virtually non-existent, inhibiting workers from getting to and from work. Additionally, it impacts residents trying to get to medical appointments, stores, or other activities. Therefore, this element should be considered for any future development in Portsmouth. Not considering these points and others would further disadvantage low-income residents at this proposed site.

I am concerned that the Council has yet to consider all alternative uses of the property or consider other organizations that the site's use may provide an advantage. The ethics and optics of the decision to focus on one organization alone are concerning enough, especially when closed-door discussions are happening between local government and outside organizations.

A. We need sustainable jobs in Portsmouth. Is there an opportunity to use the current building as an incubation center and develop startups and small businesses in the area?

B. Is there a possibility of a land swap with another organization that would preserve the current building and is more suitable for the neighborhood? For example, could the proposed skatepark be located on the site, preserve the softball field and provide some community services in the building?

C. Other land areas the city owns may be more suitable for low-and moderate-income workers for workplace accessibility, transportation, and affordable housing, which could be expanded in the future. For example, the DPW site on Greenland road may be a better alternative, or down near Junkins Avenue or Harvard Street, where the city owns the land. Additionally, the city should look not only at Portsmouth's environs alone but partnering with other towns in the general catchment area for affordable housing, including Greenland, Newington, and Kittery.

It was reported in Seacoast online that "There used to be a school there (an elementary school), which has a lot more traffic than housing units," he said. "That didn't seem to cause a problem then." However, I do not believe this is a valid statement as no traffic analysis has been completed, and traffic to and from the school was limited to specific times and days of the week and included school buses and some other light traffic but not anywhere near what is anticipated for the traffic of 80-160 units. Additionally, as residents, we have already seen an increase in traffic from Exit 3 down to West End Yards, and putting an 80-160 unit development on Sherburne would increase construction and residential traffic and potentially create safety and congestion issues given the short stretch of roadway on (inner) Greenland Road and Sherburne from the proposed egress of the new development.

Whatever happens to the current site, I hope it is primarily for the benefit of Portsmouth and NH residents, not for people outside of the state, and that should include affordable housing. Therefore, I respectfully suggest to Council that the proposed development or alternative uses at Sherburne be appropriately evaluated, correctly planned, and implemented with the most negligible impact on the neighborhood.

V/r

Aodhan MacEinri

Please indicate if you would like your comment to be part of the public record for the upcoming City Council meeting. Yes

Submitted on Mon, 02/06/2023 - 16:33

Full Name

Peter Somssich

Email

peter.somssich@gmail.com

Subject

Lister Academy Redevelopment

Address

34 Swett Ave.

Message

Dear Councilors,

While I was unable to attend the informational meeting regarding the redevelopment project for the Lister Academy site, I was not at all surprised by the strong opposition to your original plans. As the state rep for Pannaway Manor, Maple Haven area and Ward 3, I have received strong feedback from residents of Ward 3 with the message that they are rarely consulted when the City makes any decisions.

It also seemed to me, that this meeting was held with assumption that the property should be used for workforce housing and that we need to act quickly by this summer. Both assumptions seemed to me to be premature. First of all, residents of the Pannaway Manor neighborhood did not seem to have enough input in the process, regarding what THEY would like to see happen at that location. And, this rush to do something by summer, did not give anyone enough time for thoughtful and complete consideration of all options.

There needs to be a thorough process of listening to the residents of Pannaway Manor to hear what they would like for their area.

The council should keep in mind that , while affordable housing is a serious and concerning issue for Portsmouth, for city residents (already living and voting in the city) it is not top of their priority list. Protecting the quality of life in their neighborhood, and ensuring that their concerns as residents are heard, is a higher priority.

If the city engages with residents of Pannaway Manor in a good and thorough process and that outcome results in a development that includes some workforce housing as well as other development, this might be supported by residents as a package deal.

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