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Housing Alliance mulls buying mobile home park

Mayor: Borough would get COAH credit for 133 units

BY SUE MORGAN
Staff Writer

Residents of a mobile home park in Eatontown would be able stay put indefinitely if a housing advocacy agency purchases the land its 133 units occupy.

As a precautionary measure and to prevent residents of Pine Tree Mobile Village from the result of a sale of the land, the Eatontown-based Monmouth Housing Alliance is to purchase the park located at 232 Route 35 south, according to Donna Rose, the nonprofit CEO.

Many Pine Tree residents have lived in that park, one of the three mobile home parks years or more, said Rose, who addressed the Eatontown Borough Council at its June 7

Knowing that the mobile home land could be sold to a private owner and eventually redeveloped, the alliance has jumped at the opportunity to purchase the property and deed-restricted housing, she told the council.

Should the deal be sealed between the alliance and the park's current

ownership, Eatontown stands to gain credit toward its state-mandated Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) obligation, Rose said.

"We're asking if the borough would certify the acquisition and the certification would allow for affordable housing," Rose said.

The alliance is working with the state toward attaining the certification as pointed out.



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Such a partnership between a nonpr state agency is unprecedented in Ne out.

"Many of the residents are COAH-e "We hope to be able to establish a p which other towns can meet their C

State officials are realizing that they whatever affordable housing, such : is in place now so as to meet future

"The state is recognizing that they v than they can replace if they don't t: this type of housing," she continued

With that in mind, Mayor Gerald J. Tarantolo announced that a resolution of support purchase of Pine Tree, to be drafted by the borough's special counsel, will be present council's June 21 public meeting.

The resolution will be worded to support the alliance's forthcoming application for fu purchase from the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Borough Attorney Gene Anthony, who is representing the alliance in the transaction, from preparing the resolution as well as any other matters involving both the alliance

Tarantolo asked that the borough's COAH advisory committee meet with Rose to assi

The Pine Tree mobile homes would be "bonus units" that would help Eatontown mee round of its COAH obligation, the mayor told the six-member council.

"I think that the COAH committee should be involved," he said. "I would suggest tha support this."

With the state's permission, the borough's existing COAH plan could be amended to r the 133 units if the alliance purchases them and certifies them as affordable housing, '

The contract sale is still in its preliminary stages and exists only as a verbal agreemen and Pine Tree's owners, Rose stressed. She would not disclose the purchase price of t

However, Pine Tree's owners are amenable to selling to the alliance rather than other because they themselves would like to see Pine Tree continue as a mobile home park.

"The owners are favorable to affordable housing," Rose said.

The mobile home units and the land would not become deed-restricted until the propo the alliance, she explained.

"Deed restricting will make the [the units] rent-stabilized," Rose told the mayor and c

To pay for the purchase, the alliance will explore federal, state, county and local fund DCA, she said.

In the meantime, the alliance is awaiting the return of signed contracts from the seller

The organization is doing its "due diligence" by looking at individual leases for each each resident pays for the trailer pad, and the park's facilities.

Besides the 133 mobile homes, the park's business office is also located on the premises yards away from Route 35. The park is located less than half a mile south of the Mon

Should the alliance take possession of the property, it will look at possible improvements roadways, lighting and other infrastructure improvements, if needed, Rose told borough

Any money left over from the purchase could be used to pay for those upgrades, she said.

As part of its mission, the alliance works not only to construct new housing, but to use existing mobile homes as shelter, Rose said.

Traditionally, residents of mobile home parks are more vulnerable to being displaced tenants because the land the units are located on can be sold on short notice, Rose explained.

As an organization, the alliance is encouraging Eatontown and other Monmouth County municipalities to use mobile homes as a means to meet their COAH obligations, Rose said.

"It's a viable option in affordable housing," she said.

Only about 1 percent of New Jersey residents reside in mobile homes, she noted.

Retaining existing housing such as mobile home parks is less costly than buying new housing, she said.

"Preservation is far more cost-effective than replenishment," she said.

Eatontown has been working for several years to meet its COAH obligations, and to avoid "builder's remedy" lawsuits such as one it finally settled in 2004.

The borough is also proposing to purchase the abandoned Howard Commons North complex on Pine Brook Road from the U.S. Army for civilian apartments. Those 486 units could be rehabilitated and then also be applied to meet the borough's COAH obligations, Township