

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Town releases COAH funds for Bradford project

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The release of a \$325,000 contribution to fund construction of a group residence for developmentally disabled occupants was expected to be approved at the Glen Rock Borough Council's Dec. 9 public meeting.

The monies, from the borough's state-required Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) fund, will support a Bergen County's United Way residence at 15 Bradford St. for between four and 10 residents diagnosed with such developmental challenges as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, Down syndrome or autism.

The project would count toward the borough's legal obligation to provide affordable housing within the municipality. Its COAH proceeds were amassed over several years from the collection of construction-related permit fees, and do not involve property tax revenues.

New Jersey law also dictates that the funds be applied in each community within certain timeframes, after which Trenton can seize the money for use elsewhere in the state.

BCUW, which closed on the

purchase of the one-third-acre property from private owners on Sept. 15, has been reviewing contractor bids for the demolition of a condemned house on the property, which it now expects will be razed sometime in January.

According to president Thomas Toronto, the agency will develop project design and site plan applications in 2016, and hopes to begin construction late next year for 2017 completion.

The project, which was endorsed by the borough council earlier this year, is intended to provide largely independent living for residents, with some daytime assistance and transportation aid likely to be provided.

A preliminary, conceptual rendering for the structure, provided by BCUW, depicts a private home-style design incorporating some architectural features of the historic, bungalow-type homes in the neighborhood, although it would actually be a one-floor, ranch-style house. Although actual specifications are not yet determined, Toronto estimates that interior space could range up to 3,000 square feet.

In response to local resident concerns following the initial disclosure of the plan by Mayor

John van Keuren, Toronto and borough officials have assured neighbors that individuals with mental disorders or substance abuse issues would not be admitted under the residence criteria. Going forward, permanent deed restrictions would prevent the United Way or any future owner of the home from altering those criteria.

Agency and borough officials have also said that if, in the future, BCUW were to discontinue operation and/or relinquish the property, ownership would transfer to the municipality, which would remain bound by the same deed restrictions.

At the Dec. 2 council work session, van Keuren and borough attorney Robert Garibaldi reiterated the future terms and requirements, upon a request for their confirmation by Councilman Michael O'Hagan.

Although there are existing group residences in Glen Rock, the Bradford location would be BCUW's first in the borough. The agency built and operates similar homes in Mahwah, Ramsey, Allendale, Demarest and Emerson

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