

Township sells lots for special needs development

The Mahwah Township Council has approved an ordinance that paves the way for the sale of three lots on Ramapo Valley Road for the purpose of constructing special needs housing.

According to Ordinance 1733, which was approved unanimously (with Councilman Charles Jandris absent from the session), the township will transfer the property to the United Way of Bergen County/Madeline Corporation, for \$1 in accordance with the provisions of all applicable laws and legal standards. The acquisition will include, but will not be limited to, all easements, rights of way, leaseholds, and other states in and to the property.

The mayor, township clerk, business administrator, and township attorney are authorized and directed to execute all the documents necessary to effect the sale, including a contract that will be prepared or approved by the municipal attorney.

The sale involves Lots 106, 107, and 108 in Block 40, located at 92 and 98 Ramapo Valley Road (Route 202). The parcel was donated to the township last year. In the spring, the GL Group, Inc. of Bloomingdale tore down an abandoned house that was located on the site.

The house was on one of three lots fronting on Ramapo Valley Road and consisting of about 1.5 acres of land at the corner of Stryzko Avenue.

The property, currently assessed at \$589,200, was donated from the estate of Judith Webster at no cost to the township. Mahwah Township Administrator Brian Campion previously reported that the Webster family made the philanthropic donation to the township in Judith Webster's memory.

The developer plans to design and build affordable housing improvements on the site similar to the one on Franklin Turnpike in Allendale called Orchard Commons.

Campion also advised that the township plans to provide some type of permanent recognition of Webster as part of the project.

Bergen County United Way President Thomas Toronto, Madeline Corporation Executive Director Shari DePalma, Mahwah Mayor William Laforet, Bergen County Freeholder Maura DeNicola, and Judith Webster's daughter Linda Webster-Cennerazzo met to witness the demolition.

The construction project has been reviewed and approved by the township's planning board, and the site plan shows a driveway access to the site from Ramapo Valley Road leading to a turnaround area for parking which would contain a circular planter at the center and two one-story special needs housing structures located along the Stryzko Avenue and Ramapo Valley Road side of the property with a courtyard separating the two buildings.

The special needs housing is expected to contain six units with 10 beds and the two-story senior housing building, which is to be located behind the turnaround parking area, is expected to contain 12 one-bedroom apartments.

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The senior housing building is not expected to be constructed until after the special needs housing is completed



and the funds for the senior housing building become available.

The budget for the total project is \$2.3 million. The township intends to use about \$1,250,000 in development fee funds that are in the municipality's affordable housing trust fund and will add \$125,000 to that amount to prepare the site for the senior housing building. The United Way will obtain additional funding from other sources, county and state grants, and additional monies may become available to spend on the project from developers' fees.

This article includes reporting by F.J. McMahon.