

Annu Holdings Ltd

Report Number: PDS.24.040

Title: Recommendation Report Zoning by-Law Amendment for 178 Marsh St, Clarksburg

Friday March 22, 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to the town of the Blue Mountains council and planning department regarding the proposed development of 178 Marsh St in Clarksburg.

I have owned the property for well over 15 years, and have long envisioned the time when I could dramatically improve the site for the greater benefit of the town, and the people who support it as residents. We are at a critical impasse at the time of writing, where the future of this site is at a cross roads.

It is important to me as someone who has been in the area for 47 years to clear the air on some of the comments made at the council meeting Tuesday March 19<sup>th</sup>. Many of the comments and suggestions seemed largely disconnected from the years of work and feedback that has been coordinated by myself, Georgian Planning Solutions and the Town of the Blue Mountains planning department. The entire project has been designed with extensive collaboration and feedback from the town planning department who support the project as proposed, along with the county.

In particular:

- Adding green space at the corner of the building to make for a community space for all residents and visitors
- More density- Adding a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to achieve more units to assist with the towns need for rental units
- Flexibility on commercial vs residential, ground floor
- Sustainable housing
- Of note, all of the above tie to the setback requests and parking made as part of our application

Needless to say, I was disheartened listening to the comments and suggestions made at the meeting, but have nonetheless worked hard since the meeting to find appropriate and creative solutions stemming from councils seven (7) votes.

**In regards to the flexibility of having ground floor apartments as a by-law exception for this project:**

Multiple comments were made by councillors suggesting that I might have the intent of deceiving tenants in the future at my free will by way of moving a residential unit to a commercial unit. To be clear, after years of engaging with town planners on this project, it was mutually agreed that a priority for this development should be the density of residential units given the dramatic shortage of rental units in the area. The original design in fact was only two stories, but planning officials liked the concept so much that they suggested the addition of the third floor and more units. We set to work on doing this intensification and this brought us to the current design brought forward.

Coupled with this was a concern that a lack of demand for four commercial spaces in the building/town, vs. two, would be an issue for me upon completion. Would there be four business owners interested in these spaces, or would it be better to accommodate residential demand? It was suggested by the town that we apply for a bylaw exception to have residential in mind to start, with a construction design that would accommodate a move to commercial when and if there was demand or if it would be appropriate. The suggestion that I would evict tenants at my discretion seemed inappropriate while listening to the meeting. This by-law request and design concept was driven by comments from your town planners, and I was happy to accommodate to find a flexible solution. Perhaps council will consider removing the “in perpetuity” language so there is reasonable flexibility in the future. If that is not an option, it may require the project to go strictly commercial and remove certain accessibility units to be made available.

In addition, I have been a landlord to dozens of tenants over the years and always adhere strictly to the landlord and tenant board rules and regulations with respect to all matters relating to tenant and landlord rights. These rights protect tenants from overzealous landlords and would do so in any capacity on this project.

**In regards to parking spaces and the direction to have 24 spaces, vs the proposed 22.**

Given the state of Clarksburg’s water and sewer infrastructure, building in the town, with an eye towards density, while maintaining town charm, is a challenge. As stated earlier, I was encouraged to find a solution whereby 3 stories and more units for tenants could be achieved, and with that comes a requisite number of parking spaces. Given property setback requirements, which by way of the council meeting were further challenged, and accommodating the brand new, state of the art septic that will be built, getting to 24 spaces has proved to be a great challenge. Moreover, we have done everything possible to find spaces, without compromising the lovely green space designed at the corner of the property that is to be a central hub of the community. It is important to note that this green space was a pillar request of the town to be included in our design. Our engineers have found a solution that they feel will work, but it will likely come at the expense of some public, green space that was a strong recommendation of the planning department.

**Rear yard Setback**

Admittedly, I was taken aback at the revisions to the setback by law request coming so late in the planning stages. This had been on the table at the public meeting for review and

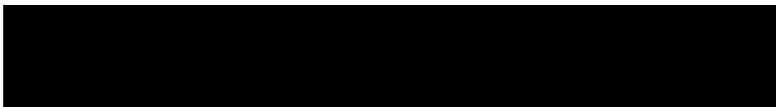
consideration and no comments or objections were brought forward on this topic by council, neighbours or the public at large. Although a 1M reduction in setback may seem trivial, it will have a dramatic impact on the overall viability of the project. Between the parking additions, and the setback change, our architects are struggling to find a solution as it ties to proximity to the well, though they are determined to find an elegant solution that could work. My comment on this, for what it is worth, is that the set back was perfectly acceptable to the town planners and county, and in fact consistent with practically all other buildings in the town. A councillor made mention of using this as a precedent for other projects in the future, but I would argue few if any projects have materially taken place in town in the last 20-30 years, so I am not sure that the precedent vs. consistency with the current town layout makes any sense.

### **Development Charges and Affordability**

Although not discussed at the Committee of the Whole meeting of March 19<sup>th</sup>, the proposed development charge increases cannot go without mention as part of this deputation. It seems that priority 1A for projects is affordability, yet, council is proposing a doubling of development fees. This is an entirely disconnected policy and one that will directly impact how a project like this one can move forward. A councillor made a point in the meeting that the proposed residential units to be located at 178 Marsh St would be “higher end.” At no point in this process have we made any such declaration or suggestion. These units are to be modest sized rental units for local workers and families and a doubling of development charges absolutely leads to higher rents, and less affordability for much needed workers in the area. The math is very simple and scuttles any of the towns 30,000 foot priorities as they are laid out. If these changes are implemented, the only thing higher end in this project will be the cost of the tenants rent!

I felt it important to get these comments on record and I will stand by them at the April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. I will also make best efforts to find a solution to the councils recommendations in order to allow this project to be suitable for all involved.

Sincerely yours,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Andrew von Teichman