

MEMORANDUM

December 6, 2013

To: Michael Behrendt, Town Planner

From: Dave Kurz, Chief of Police

Re: Madbury Commons – Commercial/Student Housing

I have reviewed the preliminary plan for the new construction of a commercial and student housing complex located on Madbury Road and abutting Pettee Brook and have the following comments:

Student Housing

I have attended a number of meetings and watched as this proposal has morphed from a pentagon shaped multi-level complex to the final renderings before the Planning Board. I have consistently been supportive of the concept of housing UNH students in appropriate locations within Durham. From the Police Department perspective, this is a very appropriate location that will result in the demolition of existing student housing consisting of two unattractive properties that routinely require significant police resources and have been the locations of some very significant criminal activity.

I am especially pleased that the administrative team of Golden Goose has proposed 24/7 on-site security and management oversight. While the issue surrounding on-site versus no on-site management of student rentals is not simplistic, the Durham Police experience has demonstrated very positive attributes of a well-managed property when the owners/managers remain with the property and are engaged with the community! The Durham Police have long maintained that management must equate to more than simply retrieving the rental checks at the end of each month. It is my contention that owners must be involved with the building complex, the community and desirous of being responsive to the surrounding neighborhood, albeit in this specific location that issue is minimal at best considering the surrounding business environment. The management company that is invested, literally and figuratively into the Durham community, is the most critical component for a well-managed and mutually successful property. By all accounts, it appears that Golden Goose has that track record in Durham as responsive and desirous of working through the many challenges the Durham Police Department faces in a university community while striving to be a reputable and successful business. That equates to a mutually

successful experience as Golden Goose obviously wants a positive profit stream while the Durham community enjoys a solid tax base with minimal dependency upon limited Town and School District resources. While a large complex such as this proposal will not routinely inject students into the school district, it would be erroneous to believe that a complex of this size will have no impact upon policing services. However, it is my opinion and aspiration that a complex of this nature, located in the appropriate location, as this complex is, would assist in providing student housing away from the historically residential neighborhoods where the lifestyles of students and residents often collide. When this collision occurs, there is increased demand for police presence and demand for stern action by the police.

Parking

The location of this complex and the philosophy of the Golden Goose should discourage renters from having automobiles through definitive statement via lease agreements. While parking is limited, it should be designed for the use of the commercial entities within Madbury Commons. While several spaces may be available for handicap renters, the proximity to the UNH campus should serve as encouragement that renters do not require automobiles. However, if overnight parking is required several nearby businesses routinely rent parking spaces for the academic year.

Egress

This was long a concern of the police department that there must be two vehicle egresses. Now that has been addressed, the department is pleased with the access to the property.

Additional Comments

- In a complex of this size, it is critical that unit numbering be developed so that public safety personnel can easily and quickly locate units, i.e., Building A which would contain A120 for unit 20 on the 1st floor; A320 for unit 20 on the 3rd floor, etc.
- Landscaping designs should focus upon keeping intruders easily observable by maximizing visibility of people in parking areas, building entrances, eliminating darkened areas by a well-conceived shrubbery planting and deliberately placed lighting on streets, parking areas and sidewalks.
- Hardware should feature window locks, dead bolts for doors, interior door hinges and well light interior corridors. All common building entrances should have locks that automatically lock when the door closes
- Any electronic surveillance such as video taping high traffic areas would be encouraged.

Final Comments

While some may interpret my comments regarding Madbury Commons as somewhat negative, they are not as I enthusiastically endorse the concept of a well-designed and situated student housing complex especially where less than desirable properties will be leveled. However it would be an error to believe that the addition of a complex of this size and composition, even when professionally managed, will have no impact upon policing services in Durham.

It should be noted that in addition to calls for service, the Durham Police has developed and implemented a program in partnership with the Durham Landlord Association that notifies landlords via email after each incident that police are required to respond to their property. Each quarter, every landlord receives a correlated analysis of ALL calls to any rental property in Durham for that three-month period. This allows the landlord to compare activity, or non-activity of their property to other during the same timeframe. As successful and proactive as this program is, it still involves a department employee to complete the reports, correlate the data and send notifications to the landlords.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.