



Energy Checklist Review: Riverwoods in Durham

Charlie Forcey | Durham Energy Committee | October 7, 2017

As Chair of the Durham Energy Committee, I was pleased to review the Energy Considerations Checklist submitted by Riverwoods and attend a meeting with their architectural team. As a result of Durham's policy of requiring the most recent published codes and designation of the town in climate zone 6, the construction is already required to meet some of the strictest standards in the state and will undoubtedly perform better than similar projects built to the New Hampshire standard code from 2009.

In addition to the required elements, it was also clear from the plans and the testimony of the architectural team that the project was being built as a premium care facility, and that whenever possible and affordable the best quality materials were being used with the long term ownership and occupancy of the building in mind. This contrasts sharply and positively with some developments in town which have been built with a much shorter investment horizon as properties that will be flipped to new management companies and developers. Riverwood's impressive long term track record managing its other campuses reinforces the committee's opinion that this development will be built with long term energy efficiency and durability in mind.

With a strong foundation in our required code, Riverwoods has elected not to pursue any additional third party certification of higher energy efficiency or net zero building practices. The committee believes such certification results in better building construction and performance due to the rigors of its adversarial reporting and commissioning requirements, and would welcome news that Riverwoods has opted to apply for certification in the future.

There were three voluntary areas where Riverwoods indicated a potential to go beyond our local codes:

- **Electric vehicle charging** for residents, employees, and visitors has been planned. The committee strongly approves of this initial investment in several charging stations and encourages the electrical system of the parking garage and parking lots to be developed with conduit, available circuit space, and 110 external outlets to support expansion of

the charging system as demand for EV charging increases. Affordable 110V outlets at parking spaces allows for overnight charging of many electric vehicles as well as electric bicycles, scooters, or motorcycles.

- **Renewable energy systems** located off-site in an adjacent lot and additional locations are not currently being planned, but there was interest in the economic and marketing advantages of the Durham campus being 100% or close to 100% renewable in its electrical energy needs. The Committee looks forward to additional discussions of those plans and assisting the planning process in any way possible.
- **Bicycle paths and alternative transportation** of residents to town amenities was discussed with a focus on the challenges around safe transit under the Route 4 highway and along “gasoline alley.” The committee would welcome dialogue on separate paths, signals, and other infrastructural improvements that would provide residents with a non-automobile safe route into downtown. Any such divided path for bikes and walkers would also help connect downtown neighborhoods with the hockey rink and Jackson Landing as a side benefit. A free trolley service (ideally low or zero emission) might also provide a town wide conduit to those recreational properties and encourage mixing of residents and local families.

While the complex requirements of graduated care make it difficult for this building to break new ground in energy efficiency or net zero energy procurement, our strong energy codes and Riverwood’s long term investment in quality construction make this complex a true asset to our municipal tax base and building stock. I want to thank the Riverwoods team for the thought and consideration they put into the check list and look forward to collaborating as the project moves forward.

Charlie Forcey
Chair, Durham Energy Committee