

Select Board Summary: “Global” housing development proposal regarding Murchison-owned lands in Sherborn, submitted by Bob Murchison on June 17, 2024.

The Murchison proposal of June 2024 encompassed his five 40B proposals in Sherborn:

1) Greenwood St., 2) Washington St., 3) Farm Rd., 4) Brush Hill Rd., and 5) Coolidge St.

Mr. Murchison proposed:

- 40B Projects 1-3 would be withdrawn, and the parcels developed under local zoning bylaws and regulations. (note: project 1 is no longer 40B, and plans for 3 have been changed).
- Project 4 would remain a 40B but be reduced in size, (note: size has been reduced).
- Project 5, the 40-unit, 100% affordable apartment building on Coolidge St., would be fully supported by the Select Board and proceed as a local initiative project (LIP), served by water/sewer infrastructure to be installed for adjacent Coolidge St. 40B and EA developments.

In exchange, the Town (Select Board) would:

- Formally approve and promote the 108 Coolidge St. plan; specifically “... support through a Local Initiative Project a 40-unit LIHTC apartment building at 108 Coolidge and work closely with the developer to connect with North Sherborn Water District water/sewer resources.”
- Regarding the parcels to be developed under local rules, the SB would direct Mr. Marsette, Town Administrator, to participate in the approval process by mediating and resolving any controversies that arise between Mr. Murchison and local regulatory boards.

On July 15, 2024, the Select Board invited Mr. Murchison to inform town residents of his proposal at a hybrid public meeting in Town Hall. Mr. Murchison described his proposal and responded to questions and opinions from residents. Select Board members were present but did not comment, as this was an informational meeting intended for residents at large.

On October 23, the Town Administrator organized a hybrid public forum at Town Hall, chaired by Moderator Mike Giaimo. Mr. Murchison again summarized his proposal and several members of the public commented. Select Board members Steven Tsai and Marian Neutra expressed their opinions as individuals familiar with the relevant negotiations and parties involved in the Coolidge St. projects (not as representatives of the Board) and member Paul DeRensis also contributed comments.

The following is a summary of the opinions of Select Board members expressed during the public discussion October 23. Individual Board members have reviewed this summary for accuracy. If judged to be consistent with the current opinion of the Board, it will be accepted as a consensus statement in the Select Board public meeting on November 21, 2024.

Regarding the 108 Coolidge St. project:

The Select Board fully supports the development of increasing affordable and diverse housing options in Sherborn, but the Board recognizes that construction of high-density residential developments in most locations is severely limited by the lack of water & sewer infrastructure, the existing hydrogeology, and the need to protect public health. Installation of water & sewer infrastructure on Coolidge St. would potentially make this area most suitable for affordable housing development without compromising public health.

Sherborn boards and committees have been working to obtain such infrastructure and enable the two pending developments on Coolidge (40B and EA) for several years. As of today, the water/sewer infrastructure is not yet in place.

Many prerequisites for its installation have not been met. These include State approval of the North Sherborn Water & Sewer District legislation, MWRA water extension and ITA (interbasin transfer approval). Two additional critical requirements are the Intermunicipal Agreements with Framingham (for water) and Natick (for sewer) extensions. These IMAs are not yet in place. Natick officials are concerned about the impacts of Coolidge St. developments on Speen St. traffic and adjacent neighborhoods.

The current candidate developer, Toll Bros., is now considering building both the 120-unit affordable housing project already approved as well as the adjacent 67-unit elder housing, and installing the required infrastructure, but they are not yet committed.

It is understood that the 108 Coolidge project can continue through the ZBA 40B Comprehensive Permit process in any case. Such a Permit could be made contingent on installation of NSWSD infrastructure and capacity, if so stipulated by the ZBA. Once the infrastructure is in place, allocation of water and sewer capacity to an approved project would be made by the future NSWSD Commission as described in the pending legislation.

Regarding the projects developed under local bylaws & regulations:

Sherborn zoning, well and septic, and wetland protection regulations are in place to protect the health of residents as well as environmental health. The quality and quantity of water resources are critical to both. Enforcement of these regulations are under the authority of the respective regulatory boards, not the Select Board or the Town Administrator. It is understood that the Town Administrator may provide information and expert advice, but the authority rests with the boards.

There are established procedures in place to modify the rules & regulations when and if new evidence emerges that justifies change. The Select Board supports and appreciates the efforts of the citizen volunteers who serve on regulatory boards.