

Great Barrington

Hillside project breaks ground

By Derek Gentile

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GREAT BARRINGTON — With state and local officials and local housing advocates looking on, ground was broken on the long-awaited — and sometimes debated — \$2.1 million Hillside Affordable Housing Project.

“Today is a day that is five years in the making,” said James Bashour, president of the Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire. “[The project] helps address the overwhelming need for housing affordable to working families, which is one of the core missions

of the CDC.”

“I bought my first house when I was 19, with some help from my parents,” said state Rep. William “Smitty” Pignatelli, D-Lenox. “My monthly mortgage payments were \$350, and I was terrified. Now, in Lenox, you can’t find an apartment for under \$1,000, \$1,200 a month. So this is a great step for the Town of Great Barrington and the CDC.”

Pignatelli also praised town residents for “having the foresight” to donate the land, about three acres, as well as authorizing the town to allocate \$96,000 in

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Ceremony breaks ground at affordable-housing project

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development funds.

“The foundations of these houses are both literally and figuratively a foundation that parents need to create a prosperous and successful family,” said Bashour.

Tim Geller, executive director of the CDC, explained that the construction work represents about \$2 million in investment from out-of-town sources.

The plan is to situate 10 rental units in three buildings on the site, with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Rents will range from \$514 for a one-bedroom unit to \$845 for a three-bedroom unit.

Households whose members work or live in Great Barrington will have a preference for up to seven of the 10 units, said Geller. One of the two-bedroom units is accessible to the handicapped.

Bashour recognized the Board of Directors of the CDC, architect Dana Bixby of West Stockbridge, contractor Allegro Construction of Pittsfield, site engineer Rob Hoogs of Foresight Land Services and rental management agency Construct Inc.

He said the CDC is still working to raise a total of \$20,000 in private community contributions.

The affordable-housing component of the project was, early on, a subject of some debate. One abutter, who did not understand the concept, charged that the town was subsidizing local “under-achievers,” while other abutters were concerned about potential drainage and traffic problems.

But, eventually, the CDC and Geller pulled together financing and local support for the project. Geller’s efforts were applauded at yesterday’s ceremony.

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