

# Select Board pledges \$85,000

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**GREAT BARRINGTON** — The Select Board voted last night to commit nearly \$85,000 toward the \$2.2 million affordable housing apartment complex on Hillside Avenue, where construction is about to begin.

Town voters at the May 2006 annual town meeting approved the measure in theory, and the board voted last night to release the funds, which will supplement other money sources for the project.

The Southern Berkshire Community Development Corp. is spearheading the project, which was the topic of extensive discussion last night, as the Select Board discussed the logistics of establishing a "payment in lieu of taxes" for the Hillside development.

## Affordable apartments

CDC Executive Director Timothy Geller presented a proposed formula for the annual payment that is based on how the Great Barrington Housing Authority makes such contributions to the town for its affordable housing apartments at Flag Rock and Brookside Manor.

For Hillside, the annual payment would be calculated based on the total 19 bedrooms — within the 10 apartments — and would amount to approximately \$2,000 annually.

Several board members were skeptical of the old formula, however, because it has been in place for years and contains no provision for incremental increases.

## Payment in lieu of taxes

Geller was eager to nail down the details last night because the project is approaching the construction phase and various financial aspects are linked to the payment in lieu of taxes. But Selectman Ronald Dlugosz said last night that he would not vote to approve the formula because he wants to explore a provision allowing for future adjustments.

Select Board Chairman Anthony Blair agreed that payments in lieu of taxes, which are sometimes made by nonprofit landowners not subject to real estate taxation, tend to be established and then left alone. On the other hand, nonprofits are obligated to pay nothing.

In this case, the board agreed, a payment is warranted because the

## Select Board pledges to housing project

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town donated the land for the Hillside Avenue project, which will use town services.

The question will be revisited at the board's next meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 30.

Also still under consideration is the CDC's request for 10 parking spaces at Southern Berkshire District Court for use by workers employed on the apartment construction job. The courthouse building — the old Dewey School — is owned by the town, but the Selectmen would not commit to parking there without first consulting courthouse administrators.

Geller said he would arrange a meeting.

In another matter, Robert McGee of the Great Barrington Housing Authority asked that the town Highway Department take over the snowplowing job at the Flag Rock Village development in Housatonic and at Brookside Manor apartments on South Main Street in downtown Great Barrington.

He said the housing authority is looking to save money, and because town plows pass by each location, they could plow the interior roads. He would like the plow-

ing as a town service, he said, but town officials were cool to the notion.

Selectwoman Margaret Beckwith was opposed outright, saying that taxpayers should not have to shoulder that cost because the housing authority property is not owned by the town. The property, while public, is funded mainly by state subsidies and tenant rents.

"I can't believe they're asking for that; it's not town property," Beckwith said. "Who else will come in and ask for this?" The board left open the possibility that the town might take over the job, depending on the reaction from the town's highway superintendent, Donald Chester, and on whether the housing authority might agree to pay the town for the service at one or both locations.

The board also voted to approve a series of beer and wine permits for businessman Richard Stanley's Triplex Management Corp. Inc. for the Triplex Cinema. The theater will host a series of special events in November, including three live theater performances, where wine and beer will be served in the mezzanine area, said Kate McCormick, Stanley's attorney.

She said smaller movie house businesses are turning to special events that include beer and wine, and that care will be taken to contain the imbibing to the second-floor mezzanine area in most instances.

Selectman Alan Inglis also briefed the board on his review of a 2003 study that evaluated downtown traffic. Although the town is supposedly in line for a state-funded reconstruction of Main Street, Selectman Peter Fish said that "waiting for TIP [the state transportation improvement program] is like waiting for Godot."

He urged the town to consider which parts of the 2003 study might be implemented with town funds, such as the coordination of traffic lights and other issues.

Blair noted that, although traffic brings its headaches, "I'd rather have that problem than the opposite problem."

In other business, the Selectmen were urged to attend a Wednesday night meeting to hear the results of a redevelopment and feasibility study prepared for the defunct New England Log Homes property and the former Searles/Bryant school property, both on Bridge Street.

The meeting is at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.