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## Special meeting yields unanimous vote on workforce apartments

By Matt Morrison  
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WINTER SPRINGS - After taking a second look, the city moved forward on a workforce housing apartment complex, scheduled to be completed next year.

At a special meeting Monday night, commissioners voted unanimously to approve the conceptual plan for the Town Parke apartments, which is planned to be constructed next to the Town Center.

The plan was originally approved at a regular commission meeting in April but was brought back to the floor when, at a workshop, commissioners realized they needed to ask some questions of the developer before allowing the plan to grow.

"I think they got their answers," said Scott Culp, executive vice president of Atlantic Housing Partners, the company that is developing the complex.

One major issue, and a sticking point among some members on the dais, is the issue of safety.

Some commissioners, such as Rick Brown, warn that the Atlantic Housing development has the potential of bringing a higher crime rate into the city's blossoming Town Center - potentially poisoning the city's economic dreams.

Others, such as Commissioner Sally McGinnis, say the complex could be a boon to the city, which suffers from a lack of affordable housing options and especially affordable housing for seniors.

Winter Springs has no assisted-living facilities for its residents, and seniors who are no longer able or cannot afford to keep up their homes are often forced to move.

The Town Parke's project is designed to have a building for seniors only, with separate amenities for its residents.

It's the only part of the project that has been met with full support from the community, said

McGinnis.

"It will happen," McGinnis said. "I'm happy."

The remainder would be housing for people earning incomes between \$24,000 and \$42,000.

Renters would not be government-subsidized, but the intricate apartment design would be paid for in part by the federal Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

The average rent for residents would be between \$600 to \$900 a month.

That has not sat well with some city leaders.

At the April meeting, Brown wanted to see Atlantic Housing's crime rates for two of its other communities in Orlando, but the developer did not have the information available.

Brown would not comment on the issue in detail after Atlantic Housing recently sued the city of Oviedo, which Atlantic Housing claims in the suit attempted to unfairly block workforce housing by forcing the company to build townhomes rather than apartments.

Culp said Winter Springs is doing its "due diligence" in addressing the safety issue and expressed confidence that the project would move forward.

He called Monday's meeting "a good exercise."

The city had its concerns answered by the developer and decided to move forward on the project, McGinnis said.

The first step of that will be housing for 94 families, 47 seniors and 60 unrestricted homes, she said.

The next step for the developer is to apply for approval from the state.

The process is competitive, Culp said, lasting several months.

Atlantic Housing has yet to apply.

"Hopefully we'll have the opportunity to build a quality workforce housing in the city," he said.

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