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Fairfield commission OKs senior housing project

By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — The city's planning commission has approved a three-story senior housing complex, which will now go to the city council for that body's final approval.

Commissioners expressed concern with how the property might develop in the future, but on the whole were impressed with the progress made by Clover Construction Management of Buffalo, which is developing the complex, which will sit on on 6.5 acres of land on the north side of Patterson Drive, near Planet Fitness.

The proposed complex calls for a 119-unit senior apartment building with a density of 21 units per acre. The complex will include one- and two-bedroom units, according to city documentation.

"We're quite excited about the project. We've worked hard with the staff to make improvements," said Kurt Meeske, a senior real estate director for Clover.

Commissioners had been concerned about the parking for the complex. According to Tim Bachman, the city's director of development, the complex would have 128 parking spaces, with a bank of land set aside for additional parking, should it become needed. The additional bank would provide for 33 additional spaces.

Meeske noted that Clover has completed 20 similar projects across the country, with six more under construction, and none have run into parking issues thus far. When asked how much the rent would be, Meeske said he was speaking only in generalities, but that rent would typically run approximately \$1,000 per month for a two-bedroom unit of 900 square feet.

Ron D'Epifanio was the only planning commission member to vote against the project. He praised Clover for their work but said he has seen too many examples of apartment complexes in Fairfield declining in quality over the years.

"Things have changed, and it's been for the worse" he said.

While Commissioner Bill Woeste, who also sits on city council, voted for the project, he expressed similar concerns. In talking to senior citizens around the community, "Most of the reaction I got was, how is it going to look 10 years from now," he said.

The city requires maintenance of a pond with a walking trail on the property. Clover Construction Management and Neyer Properties, the current property owner, would collaborate on the maintenance of that, so that will no longer be the city's responsibility.

According to David Hogan, a senior project manager for Clover, amenities include a community room on the first floor, a weight room, and a gathering area for parties, a library and other functions. Each bedroom unit has its own washer and dryer, with a back patio, Hogan said. Clover has begun building units in other Ohio cities, including Parma and Willoughby Hills, both of which are in the northeast, near Cleveland.

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