

Developer of apartment buildings addresses concerns

By William J. Kemble

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TOWN OF ULSTER, N.Y. >> BVH Sapphire Trust is pushing back against objections to its application for two three-unit apartment buildings near the northern end of Glenerie Boulevard.

Trust member Eli Sher responded Thursday to concerns related to the project over traffic, environmental effects, and emergency situations during a Town Board meeting.

“They said that they (don’t) want more cars in the area,” he said. “Six one-bedroom units is not (going to) bring that (many) cars to the area. You’re talking about six, maybe eight to 10 cars, and they’re going out to work in the morning and they come back at night. It’s really minimal. It’s almost nothing.”

Environmental concerns were considered to be baseless by Sher, who said studies found there would not be an adverse impact. “It’s a flat land so there’s no concern for (stormwater) runoff,” he said.

Residents’ issues with having no way to reach the main roads in the event of a train cutting off the only crossing were also addressed by Sher.

“They’re saying that the train might collide while it’s on the tracks and one of my six people is going to have an emergency at that time,” he said. “The chances of that happening is like a snowball’s chance of freezing in hell. ... That seems a little bit ridiculous.”

Sher, after finishing the itemized series of responses, reminded board members that the project is considered to be allowed under town zoning law. “This is in the codes ... so I think it’s our right as landowners to create this development,” he said.

Sher also told the board that the six units would help with a shortage of housing in the region.

“The town planner had said ... that there’s a crushing lack of housing in Ulster County and that’s why he thought it would be appropriate for the town to approve it,” he said.

Ulster County officials have been pushing for ways to deal with a housing shortage for low- and middle-income residents. In February 2021, they released the county Housing Action Plan, which is currently being provided to all municipalities as part of efforts to encourage developers to build units for people who fall under the average median household income.

“Housing costs are increasing, household spending power is declining, and the supply of safe and affordable housing in the county does not meet demand,” county officials wrote in the plan.

County officials contend that the “availability of workforce housing is a critical part of the formula” needed to resolve the housing shortage.

Sher told the Freeman after the meeting that BVH does not intend to base rents on income-based guidelines and tenants would pay market rates.

“‘Workforce’ would regulate the amount of rent we charge, so we can’t do that,” he said.