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December 12, 2007

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME : Chrysler Apartments
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Natick
PROJECT WATERSHED : Concord
EOEA NUMBER : 14129
PROJECT PROPONENT : Chrysler Apartments, LLC
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : November 12, 2007

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.03 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Project Description

As described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), this project consists of the redevelopment of an existing warehouse/office site located at 5 Chrysler Road in Natick to include a 404-unit (435,500 sf) mixed-income apartment complex in two 11-story apartment buildings, a total of 600 parking spaces including a 4.5-story parking garage for 372 spaces, and a 3,000 sf clubhouse with in-ground pool on a 6.5-acre parcel of property located Chrysler Street. The project site abuts a Home Depot store to the north, a commercial building, Speen Street and the Natick Mall to the west, the Cochituate Rail Trail and the Cochituate State Park to the east, and the existing Wonder Bread rail spur and the proponent's new 183-unit Cloverleaf Apartment project to the south. Twenty-five percent of the proposed Chrysler apartment housing units (101 units) will be affordable and available for purchase by persons who meet the HUD Affordability Requirement.



The project will be serviced by municipal water and sewer. Site access will be provided from Chrysler Road and connect to Speen Street at an existing signalized intersection. Speen Street provides roadway connections to Route 9, Route 30 and the MassPike. The project will include the demolition of an existing 89,000 sf warehouse/office building with loading docks and 175 surface parking spaces.

Permits and Jurisdiction

The project is subject to review pursuant to Section 11.03 (6)(b)(13) and (6)(b)(15) of the MEPA regulations because it requires a state permit and will generate 2,000 or more (2,272 new vehicle trips) new average daily trips (adt) providing access to a single location, and the construction of 300 or more (451 new parking spaces) new parking spaces at a single location. The project requires a Sewer Connection Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). The project must comply with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for stormwater discharges from a construction site of over one acre from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The proponent is seeking a Board of Appeals Special Permit pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40B to allow the construction of 101 apartment units to be dedicated as affordable and sold to low and moderate income housing; the project would require an approval from the Department of Housing and Community Development in the event of an appeal of the Board of Appeals permit. Also, it requires an Order of Conditions from the Natick Conservation Commission (and hence a Superseding Order of Conditions in the event the local Order is appealed). Because the proponent is seeking financial assistance from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership or MassHousing for the project, MEPA has broad scope jurisdiction that extends to all significant environmental impacts potentially resulting from the project. These include land alteration, wetlands, drainage, water quality, traffic, wastewater and historic and archaeological resources.

While the project exceeds a threshold under the MEPA regulations pertaining to transportation, it does not require a State agency permit associated with traffic. I ask the proponent to work closely with the Towns of Natick, Framingham and Wayland to clarify the proposed project's *potential* impacts that may negatively affect traffic operations and LOS on roadways and roadway intersections located in these communities, and to address the concerns raised in the comment letters received on this project related to the project's potential traffic impacts.

Traffic

The transportation impact analysis (TIA) included in the ENF generally conforms to the Guidelines for EIR/EIS Traffic Impact Assessment as required. The analysis indicates that the proposed project will generate 2,714 vehicle trips per day (tpd), an increase of 2,272 tpd. According to the proponent, significant traffic mitigation improvements in the project area have been previously proposed and programmed for the Natick Mall Expansion project (EEA #12935, December 30, 2004) that are designed to support the anticipated traffic impacts associated with a number of planned development projects within the project area (500,000 sf of commercial space, 1,500 residential units) including the proposed Chrysler Apartments project.

Specifically, the mitigation commitments established for the Natick Mall expansion project include signalization, signal coordination and interconnection, geometric modifications, signage, pedestrian and emergency access improvements at several intersections along Speen Street within the project area. As described in the ENF, with the Natick Mall project's traffic mitigation improvements, the proposed Chrysler Apartments project will not result in significant impacts to roadways and intersections along Speen Street. The proponent has committed to a number of traffic mitigation measures including: re-timing of the existing signalized Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection at the site driveway, implementation of a traffic monitoring study for the Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection to identify the need, if any, for additional future mitigation including extension of the Speen Street southbound left-turn lane at Chrysler Road, signal timing adjustments for the signalized Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection, and roadway signage and markings at Chrysler Road.

Many commentors have expressed concern with the project's potential traffic impacts on intersections located along Speen Street in Natick, Framingham and Waltham that may not have been studied in the proponent's TIA. I expect that the proponent may be required to do additional traffic analysis during local review of the project. In their comment letter, the MetroWest Growth Management Committee (MWGMC) has requested that the proponent develop a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan for apartment residents to encourage the use of transit, pedestrian and bicycle and minimize the total number of project-generated vehicle trips. While I recognize the challenges inherent in developing a successful TDM program for a residential apartment site, I remind the proponent of its obligation to develop the maximum mitigation feasible for traffic impacts. I ask that the proponent evaluate all feasible TDM measures to reduce vehicle trips to and from the site including bicycle and pedestrian access, transit access, reduced rate transit passes for employees, and membership in the MetroWest/45 Transportation Management Association (TMA). The proponent should consult with Metro West and the local Lift Transit Service during final project design to discuss coordination of this project with existing transit and/or shuttle services to promote transit use by employees and patrons. The proponent's TDM plan can and should be incorporated as part of the proponent's transportation mitigation program.

Transit

The proponent should work with local officials to identify bus connections and potential shuttle bus services from activity nodes to the project site. The proponent should commit to participate in discussions with the newly formed MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) to identify opportunities to for serving the Chrysler Apartments site with transit service.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The ENF identified the proposed pedestrian improvements included with this project including the location of a sidewalk alignment from the project site along Chrysler Road to Speen Street. The ENF discussed the use of the adjacent Cochituate Rail Trail and rail spur as a pedestrian/bicycle connector across Speen Street, which could connect the Mall to other pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

Cochituate Rail Trail

As described elsewhere in this Certificate, the project site abuts the Cochituate Rail Trail (CRT) including the Wonder Bread rail spur, and is located immediately west of the Cochituate State Park. The Cochituate Rail Trail plan has been proposed as a public inter-modal (bike/hike) trail that, when completed, will extend 4 miles from Saxonville Village in Framingham to Natick Center. The proponent has acknowledged that the project's adjacency to the CRT represents a unique opportunity to promote and enhance pedestrian connections between the project site and project area land uses and transportation nodes including, but not limited to Cochituate State Park, the Natick Mall, General Cinemas and Shopper's World Mall. According to the information provided in the ENF, the proponent has agreed to contribute to the Town of Natick's acquisition and improvement of the Cochituate Rail Trail plan.

In their comments, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has recommended that the proponent maintain a vegetative buffer between the proposed development and the CRT corridor. DCR has also expressed concern with the overall height of the proposed apartment buildings and their potential visual impacts to the Lake Cochituate resource area. DCR has requested that the apartment buildings not be visible above the existing tree line as seen from Lake Cochituate and from the park's day use area. I ask that the proponent to work closely with DCR's Cochituate State Park Supervisor, the Town of Natick Recreation and Planning Departments and others, to address the potential project-related impacts to Lake Cochituate. Specifically, the proponent's final project design should resolve the outstanding concerns expressed by DCR and others regarding the project's visual impacts, the need for a reasonable and user friendly access from the project site to and along the CRT and the CRT spur, and the need for a safe Rail Trail Spur/Speen Street crossing design to accommodate future Rail Trail pedestrians and bicyclists safely across Speen Street. The final project design should include a mutually agreeable alternative to the proponent's proposed relocation of the existing pedestrian crossing and access ramps and pedestrian indicators at the Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection to connect the project site's pedestrian/bicycle trail activities to the CRT and the Natick Mall area.

Parking

The ENF proposes an increase in parking from the existing 175 spaces to 606 spaces. The project site plans provided in the ENF depict a 4.5-story parking garage to contain approximately 372 parking spaces. The remaining 234 parking spaces will be located on site as surface parking. In their comments, MWRA has indicated that the project design must incorporate oil/gas separators in its proposed parking garage structure. Parking at the site is proposed to include approximately a total of 618 spaces (1.5 parking spaces per unit). According to the proponent, the number of proposed parking spaces is greater than the amount required under local zoning (500 spaces total). According to the proponent, the proposed parking space plan is consistent with current industry standards and is necessary to support the proposed project. As noted elsewhere in this Certificate, Implementation of transportation demand measures and provision of good bicycle and pedestrian access can further reduce the amount of parking needed.

Drainage

The project will be re-developed consistent with MassDEP's Stormwater Management guidelines and the Town of Natick's stormwater requirements. As described in the ENF, the proposed stormwater management plan will include the use of best management practices (BMPs), deep sump catch basins with water quality treatment units, and the use of subsurface recharge chambers to provide for the on-site infiltration of surface stormwater and roof runoff. Even though the project is a redevelopment project, the proponent will achieve a Total Suspended Solids (TSS) removal rate of in excess of 80 percent for stormwater collection system. The proponent has explained how the proponent would improve its TSS projections.

In their comments, MassDEP has indicated that the project site abuts a section of Lake Cochituate that has been determined to be degraded from pollutants containing pathogens, and is listed as a Category 5 waterbody in the *Massachusetts Year 2006 Integrated List of Waters*. MassDEP has requested that the project's stormwater management plan restrict or regulate stormwater runoff from the project site. The proponent should also work closely with the City of Natick to ensure that the stormwater management plan is in conformance with the Natick's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Stormwater management permit program. The proponent should continue to work closely with MassDEP during the permitting process to address the comments received from MassDEP concerning the proponent's proposed stormwater management plan.

I encourage the proponent to further consider Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in site design and stormwater management plans. LID techniques incorporate stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and can reduce impacts to land and water resources by conserving natural systems and hydrologic functions. The primary tools of LID are landscaping features and naturally vegetated areas, which encourage detention, infiltration and filtration of stormwater on-site. Water conservation measures are appropriate for this site as well. LID can also protect natural resources by incorporating wetlands, stream buffers and mature forests as project design features. For more information on LID, explore <http://www.mass.gov/envir/lid/> and the national LID manual (Low Impact Development Design Strategies: An Integrated Design Approach), which can be found on the EPA website at: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/>.

Water Use and Wastewater Generation

The project will use approximately 71,632 gpd of water and generate 65,120 gpd of wastewater. The project site is currently served by the Town of Framingham's sewer system located in Chrysler Road and Speen Street. According to the comments received from the Framingham Planning board, the East Framingham Sewer Improvement Project is schedule to be constructed in 2009-2012 and will include the elimination of Framingham's Speen Street sewer force main. As described in the ENF, the proponent has proposed to convey the project's wastewater flows to the Town of Natick's sewer system located south of the project site in Superior Drive. Specifically, the proponent's wastewater management plan includes the construction of an on-site pump station to convey wastewater flows south under an existing railroad spur right-of-way and connecting to the Natick sewer system via the sewer connection for the new Cloverleaf Retail and Apartment Complex.

Wastewater flows from Natick, Ashland, Framingham and Wellesley are conveyed to the MWRA's Framingham Extension Relief Sewers to the Deer Island Wastewater Treatment Facility for treatment and discharge. MassDEP and MWRA have indicated that the proponent will be required to participate in a flow control program to remove extraneous clean water (infiltration and inflow (I/I)) as project mitigation. At a minimum, the proponent will be required to offset I/I on a 4:1 basis (approximately 260,480 gpd) of I/I removal to new wastewater flow generated.

Sustainable Design

The size of this project and the early stage of the design presents an important opportunity to successfully incorporate cost-effective sustainable design elements and construction practices into the project. Incorporation of sustainable design measures could minimize the project's environmental impacts and reduce the project's long-term energy demands and operating costs. I strongly encourage the proponent to consider incorporating elements such as the following into its project design, construction and management:

- renewable energy technologies to meet energy needs;
- optimization of natural day lighting, passive solar gain, and natural cooling;
- energy efficient HVAC and lighting systems, appliances and other equipment, and solar preheating of air;
- building supplies and materials that are non-toxic, made from recycled materials, and made with low embodied energy;
- easily accessible and user-friendly recycling system infrastructure into building design;
- development of a solid waste reduction plan;
- development of an annual audit program for energy consumption, waste streams, and use of renewable resources; and,
- water conservation and reuse of wastewater and stormwater.

Construction Period Impacts

The project includes demolition of an existing 89,000 sf warehouse and office building. MassDEP has noted that demolition and construction activities must comply with both Solid Waste and Air Quality control regulations. The proponent should carefully review MassDEP's comments and demonstrate the project's consistency with the applicable regulations. I strongly encourage the proponent to participate in MassDEP's Clean Air Construction Initiative (CACI) and the MassDEP Diesel Retrofit Program. The CACI program helps proponents identify appropriate mitigation for minimizing air pollution from construction vehicles such as retrofit of construction equipment with particulate filters and oxidation catalysts and/or use of on-road low sulfur diesel (LSD) fuel.

MassDEP has also noted that demolition and construction activities must comply with both Solid Waste and Air Quality control regulations. The proponent should carefully review MassDEP's comments and demonstrate the project's consistency with the applicable regulations.

Mitigation

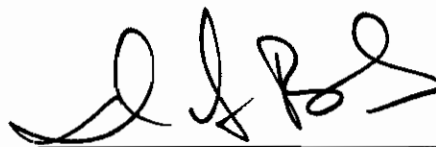
The ENF includes a specific commitment to implement the following mitigation measures:

- re-timing of the existing signalized Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection at the site driveway,
- implementation of a traffic monitoring study for the Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection to identify the need, if any, for additional future mitigation including extension of the Speen Street southbound left-turn lane at Chrysler Road, signal timing adjustments for the signalized Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection, and roadway signage and markings at Chrysler Road;
- the proponent has agreed to contribute funds towards the Town of Natick's acquisition and improvement of the Cochituate Rail Trail;
- relocate the existing pedestrian crossing and access ramps and pedestrian indicators at the Speen Street/Chrysler Road intersection;
- construct and maintain a stormwater management system consistent with MassDEP's Stormwater Guidance; and,
- construction of sidewalks throughout the development and along Chrysler Road to Speen Street.

Based on the information provided by the proponent and consultation with relevant public agencies, I conclude that no further MEPA review is required. The review of the ENF has served adequately to disclose potential impacts and mitigation, and to demonstrate that project impacts do not warrant the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. While I am not requiring an EIR for this project, I am confident that the state and local permitting processes will ensure that the proposed project's stormwater management plan and traffic impact analysis is consistent with MADEP's Stormwater Management Guidelines, and local requirements for project-related traffic mitigation plan. The proponent can resolve any remaining issues in the permitting.

December 12, 2007

Date



Ian A. Bowles, Secretary

Comments received (continued on next page)

12/03/07	Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
12/03/07	Linda L. Segal
12/04/07	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
12/04/07	Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) - NERO
12/05/07	Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Comments received (continued)

12/05/07 MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
12/05/07 MetroWest Growth Management Committee
12/06/07 Town of Wayland Planning Board
12/05/07 Town of Framingham Planning Board
12/07/07 Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee
12/07/07 Kelly Engineering Group, Inc.

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