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Support for Nike site committee

By **Katie Liesener**/ Staff Writer
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A self-declared majority of the Board of Selectmen gave its blessing to the Nike Reuse Advisory Committee on Tuesday night to continue to explore the feasibility of a site plan for a 16-unit development that would include 11 affordable units.

The board was of mixed opinion on whether the current site plan properly preserved design quality, due particularly to a lack of garages. But board members concluded they would entrust the task of balancing quality with affordability to the committee that selectmen Chairman Michael Tichnor called "one of the most competent committees this town has ever put together."

Selectman Joe Nolan added, "I have faith they will exercise this charge properly."

Though an official vote was not taken, each member of the board took the opportunity to publicly weigh in on the current state of the site plan.

Nolan said he believed the committee would not allow the development to be "anything less than stellar." But to achieve that level of quality, he suggested the committee seek private funding or money through the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to improve design quality.

Selectman Doug Leard, a retired firefighter, said he supported the committee's recommendations, particularly for the sake of municipal officials who currently cannot afford to live in town but would like to do so.

Selectman Alan Reiss said that choosing housing for town employees over garages was "an easy choice to make." He said that choice put him in the "super majority" of those who had voted at Town Meeting for the committee to pursue as much affordable housing as possible.

Selectman Bill Whitney stated that the development's design should remain consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

"(The committee) has not done that, in my opinion," he said.

Tichnor said he was supportive of the committee's proposed ratio of affordable housing, "however, only if it doesn't compromise quality and remains consistent with the character of the neighborhood." He voiced concern about such design elements as garages, decks, porches and yards, and urged the committee to seek other avenues of funding to include or enhance those elements.

All told, the board approved the committee's work with the understanding it should continue to keep an eye to quality of construction and design and continue to seek input from neighbors of the site.

Nike Reuse Advisory Committee Co-Chairwoman Gretchen Schuler said the committee had held two meetings with neighbors in recent months and would continue to do so.

The room was crowded with neighbors who spoke during the public comment period. Some expressed concern about the design quality; others asked the board to follow the committee's recommendations.

Kurt Tramosch, a neighbor of the site, told selectmen that he and another man had conducted a survey of homes within a three-quarter mile radius of the site and counted 156 non-garaged vehicles among 104 homes. Visible surface vehicles at the development site would be consistent with the neighborhood, he said.

Schuler said the next step for the committee will be to seek additional funding from the CPA for a more detailed design concept of the site.

The selectmen said they reserve final vote of approval over the design plan.

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