

02/12/21

Information concerning possible use of the Berry Property

The Casco Selectboard recently had preliminary discussions about the possible uses for the Berry Property. The email below, sent to the Town Manager, is from Dana Totman, President/CEO of Avesta Housing, concerning the use of the property for affordable housing.

We have done a quick examination of the Casco site. One important question is whether or not the comp plan complies with state growth management policies. If it does not and since there is no water or sewer it would essentially not be eligible for Maine Housing funding. If the comp plan does comply then the site is eligible for Maine Housing funding but not very competitive.

Among the items which hurt Casco's funding chances are:

Casco is not a service center community.
It is not walkable e.g. sidewalks to many activities of daily living
The area rents are quite modest
Probably unlikely the town would provide a TIF
Unknown if town would donate the land or sell at discount

A couple of years ago, I helped convene a group of similar small towns. Some of these towns in particular were like Casco in that they didn't have a recognized 'downtown' but had enough of a population to warrant a modest senior housing development. People in Minot said they 'had voted and lived here all their lives and didn't want to have to move to Lewiston for senior housing'. China said the same thing indicating they 'didn't want to have to move to Waterville'. While we have made some progress and now there are senior developments almost underway in Belfast, Fryeburg, Gray, Farmington, Ellsworth, and Thomaston there are still many small towns that go without senior housing. Happy to report that the town of Gorham will soon welcome our 5th phase of senior housing on the site of the old Millett school.

So Don, I am happy to discuss this more with you and chat with other town officials at any time. In short, it is likely very difficult to secure the funding for senior housing on that site in Casco but perhaps not impossible if there is a groundswell of strategic political and community support. Avesta has senior developments in Windham, Standish, Raymond, Naples, Bridgton and Gray but most were built back in the 80s when federal funding was the source of affordable housing financing.

It was great to hear from you and to know you are still doing what you do so well.

Dana
Dana Totman
President/CEO
Avesta Housing
307 Cumberland Ave. | Portland, ME 04101
p: 207-245-3367