

Sunnybrook Community development group releases statement regarding last week's Grants Committee meeting

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ALTON - The Sunnybrook development group has released a statement following comments released by Alton Mayor Brant Walker after last weeks Madison County Grants Committee.



In Mayor Walkers statement he said the decision of the Grants Committee to withhold support for expending HOME funds on the proposed Community of Sunnybrook development validates the city's decision to withdraw any and all support for this proposed development.

Andrew Carruthers, attorney and spokesperson for the Sunnybrook development, stated it's clear that a campaign of misinformation continues to surround Sunnybrook Community.

“From the Mayor’s statement late last week it’s clear the campaign of misinformation about the development and those involved continues,” the release reads. “He stated that the developers have not worked closely with the City throughout the process and implied that I made some misstatement about my own personal involvement. The Mayor is likely well aware, from speaking to his attorney, that I was brought on only about ten days ago following his sudden withdrawal of support. As for the developers, they were clearly working with the City for over a year as evidenced by the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Mayor on June 15, 2017. The Mayor likes to claim that he ‘had’ to obtain a copy of the IHDA application through a Freedom of Information request. The truth is that he never asked the developers for a copy of the application, so to imply that he could only obtain it by submitting a FOIA is misleading.”

Carruthers also addressed the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Mayor Walker last year.

“Under the Terms section of the MOU, which was prepared by the City, it states ‘The project shall be constructed in a manner which will allow for the sale of owner-occupied units upon the completion of the 15-year LIHTC (Low Income Housing Tax Credits) compliance period. Tenants shall accrue an annual credit towards the purchase price of the unit which will be applied upon each individual sale after completion of the 15-year LIHTC compliance period,’” Carruthers stated in the release.

Carruthers continued, “With these terms including the word ‘tenants’ and a statement that the units will be available for sale only after the 15-year period, we don’t understand how the Mayor could have honestly believed this development was going to be something other than rental housing, at least for the first 15 years. Also, as this is a LIHTC development the availability of some vouchers is to be expected and was explained to the Mayor. I understand that the Mayor is a landlord himself and is presumably familiar with the term ‘tenant’ and with the basic requirements of LIHTC, but if he was confused about these terms he could have asked his lawyers. In any case, if there’s any part of the MOU that the Mayor feels the developers are not following he only needs to point it out and it will be addressed.”

Carruthers also casts doubt on Mayor Walker’s stated reasons for withdrawing support.

“He claims that he withdrew support because he was led to believe there would be no vouchers or rental housing. The MOU signed by the Mayor completely refutes these

claims, so his continued insistence that he was misled is just more fake news. While I suppose an elected official is entitled to change his mind in response to public input, it is unacceptable that he has attempted to blame the developers for his change in position, as though he was somehow misled.”

As for the future of the project, Carruthers indicated the development group is moving forward. “Despite all of the misinformation over the past few weeks, we’re confident everyone, even the Mayor, will be very pleased with the finished product.”