

# County backs low-rent housing plan: Historic-district proposal would include Friary

Shaner, Cassie . McClatchy - Tribune Business News ; Washington [Washington]03 Apr 2008.

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## ABSTRACT

Turner said the project will be built in a cleared area along Van Voorhis Road, between West Run Road and Baker's Ridge Road, using environmentally friendly building materials, including brick and "hardy plank," a composite wood product made with recycled materials.

## FULL TEXT

Apr. 3--THE MONONGALIA COUNTY

Commission meets at 7 p.m. Monday, in County Commission chambers, Monongalia County Courthouse, 243 High St.

A new housing complex on Van Voorhis Road may provide an affordable alternative to the highpriced rents in Morgantown.

William Turner, of Pison Development, proposed the development to the Monongalia County Commission at a meeting Wednesday. He is seeking approval from the state to build the 38-unit facility in conjunction with the West Virginia Housing Development Fund, using federal low-income tax credits to help fund construction.

The commission unanimously approved a letter of support for the project.

Turner said the state has strict guidelines for who can live in the facility, based on the county's average family income and the number of family members, but in general, it would be available only to families that earn less than \$100,000. Rent for a two-bedroom unit would be about \$550 per month, including water, sewer and garbage service. A three-bedroom unit would cost about \$650 per month, with the same utilities included.

"It's well below market rate," he said. "The Housing Development Fund mandates that we keep it affordable for a minimum of 30 years. There's a deed restriction that will be placed on the property here in the county."

Per state rules, full-time students will not be permitted to live there, but part-time students will be accepted, he said.

"They're built specifically for middle-class working families," Turner said.

Though Commissioner John Pyles initially recommended a letter of unqualified support for the project, the commission unanimously approved a letter of support with no opposition. A letter of support, either unqualified or with no opposition, must accompany the application for tax-credit assistance.

"I'm not opposed to the project, but I don't think we have enough information to give unqualified support," Commissioner Asel Kennedy said.

Turner said the project will be built in a cleared area along Van Voorhis Road, between West Run Road and Baker's Ridge Road, using environmentally friendly building materials, including brick and "hardy plank," a composite wood product made with recycled materials. Recreational areas -- including a playground and basketball courts -- will provide green space.

If it's approved by the state and there are no objections from the county planning commission, Turner, who has constructed 15 similar facilities throughout the state, said, construction would begin this fall.

Good Counsel Friary

The commission refused a request from the county's Historical Landmarks Commission to schedule a public

hearing to create a county historic district that would include the Good Counsel Friary.

The friary is for sale, listed with realty firm Howard Hanna for \$2.8 million.

Kennedy said the commission needs more information before taking action.

"I just think for this commission to even consider taking private property and saying, 'It has to stay this way,' we're potentially affecting the value of that property big time, one way or the other," Kennedy said. "I just want to do it very slowly."

The proposed historic area would be called the Tony Pietro Local Historic District, and would include the friary, as well as several surrounding properties.

If the commission chooses to schedule a public hearing and move forward with the designation, Chad Proudfoot, chairman of the Historic Landmarks Commission, said it would be the first county-designated historic district enacted in the state.

Pyles said making the friary part of a historic district would protect the facility from being destroyed or dramatically altered.

"It would be better to preserve it and put it on the historical registry so it isn't changed, so it isn't put into a parking lot or a junkyard or something," he said.

Proudfoot agreed to contact the State Historic Preservation Office regarding Kennedy's concerns.

Other business

The commission also:

Approved a resolution declaring April 7-13 Public Health Week in Monongalia County.

Approved a resolution declaring April 13-19 Crime Victims' Rights Week in Monongalia County.

Approved a \$255,214 bid from R.G. Friday, of Pittsburgh, to complete external masonry repairs at the courthouse.

Credit: The Dominion Post, Morgantown, W.Va.

## DETAILS

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