

Developer asks for more time on Aberdeen plan

Homeowners oppose rental units

By **JIM McCONVILLE**
STAFF WRITER

ABERDEEN — The developer of two sets of proposed township housing, one in the Cliffwood Beach section and the other on Route 34, requested a second extension at Wednesday night's Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting.

RCM Group LLC requested that its deadline, which the board set at Oct. 1 in April, be extended to Dec. 31.

Earlier this year, RCM applied for variances for the construction of Renaissance at Aberdeen, a 132-unit rental complex on County Road in Cliffwood Beach, and Villages at Aberdeen on Route 34.

The board in April granted RCM Group its first extension request after the company was confronted with residents' opposition to its affordable apartments in the Cliffwood Beach section of the township.

RCM Group also has sought a variance for its 62-unit Villages at Aberdeen market-priced townhouse complex on Route 34.

Craig M. Gianetti, attorney for the Red Bank law firm Giordano, Halleran and Ciesla, representing RCM, said the three-month extension is being requested because RCM is in mediation with Aberdeen over its state Council on Affordable Housing plan.

"Our project is part of their (COAH) plan," Gianetti said. "And our first mediation is not until October. Nothing really was going to happen until this mediation starts to move forward, so we're asking for the extension as the (mediation) process moves forward."

At the board's April 1 meeting, RCM asked to withdraw its application indefinitely so the company could rethink and amend its plan.

six-month window to amend and resubmit the plan.

"If this application is not re-presented to the board by Oct. 1, six months from today ... the application will be deemed void and withdrawn, and you'll have to start from scratch," Zoning Board Chairman Harvey Brenner said.

RCM had planned an 11-building complex between Salem Place and Moore Place. RCM needed a use variance because the area is designated for light industrial and conservation or recreation use.

The development was included in the township's plan to meet the state's affordable housing requirements.

However, 45 Cliffwood Beach residents who make up the Cliffwood Homeowners Association have objected strongly to the all-rental-unit project, saying it would devalue their neighborhood.

Association spokeswoman Melisa McLeod said the group objected to RCM's plans to build a large rental housing complex in Cliffwood Beach while building its high-end Villages at Aberdeen across town at the same time.

"We were looking for the developer to make it a bit more fair," McLeod said in April. "It is totally unfair to put 132 multi-family, low-income housing — all renters — in one area."

McLeod said Cliffwood Beach residents would be open to a multiuse complex that contained a combination of market-value townhouses and affordable rental units.

"Put some townhouses over on this side," McLeod said. "It's better for the community. We're looking to add to the community, not take it away."

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