

# **MARINA BAY APARTMENTS UPDATE**

## **OCTOBER 4, 2010**

Since the last meeting of the Ballentine-Dutch Fork Civic Association, concerted efforts have been made to learn even more about the proposed Marina Bay Apartments at the current site of Lake Murray Marina. While many questions have been answered, many have not. In addition, some of the answers we have received lead only to more questions. I thank our County Councilman Bill Malinowski, who has been quite responsive to our Members' questions. There are also several members who have been instrumental in pursuing various avenues as well. Many of the currently unanswered questions revolve around the financing aspects of the Apartment project.

Mr. Malinowski was able to find out that essentially the Apartment project (for the most part) does meet and/or exceed current County Planning Department minimum standards. He has pushed to find out more and more, particularly as new questions are posed. Along with research by Association Members, some of the concerns are as follows:

**Parking-** The proposed plan does meet and exceed County Code, yet the number of proposed parking spaces does seem low. Laura Parnell has found out that Horry County has higher thresholds for parking standards based on their classification of resort-type properties. She also learned that Lexington County also has minimum thresholds than Richland County. She had prepared an estimate of anticipated parking needs for the project that were higher than the plans submitted to Richland County. However, upon her inquiries to the County (as well as Bill Malinowski's), the official RC Planning Department confirmed that Code would have to be changed (a lengthy process) in order to affect this project.

**Traffic-** The traffic study that was submitted in the planning process determined that increase of traffic from the Apartments would still be in line with what the State DOT considers an adequate level of service. Efforts are being made to have the County revisit this issue. The current plans show no considerable widening of Marina Road, although Mr. Arnold did offer to build a sidewalk on the Marina Rd frontage of his property. Neither the County nor the State have any plans for extending this sidewalk to Rt. 76.

**HUD Environmental Review-** In answer to Bill Malinowski's further inquiries, the HUD determined that the concerns he put forth would be adequately addressed by the County, DHEC, and other regulatory agencies. As a result, Mr. Malinowski plans to re-address these concerns to the County later this week.

**HUD/FHA Financing- This area seems to be the most up-in-the-air.** Mr. Arnold had told me that he had sought and received an extension to submit his application and plans earlier in September. It is my understanding that the HUD decision of rejection or to proceed with the next set of "hoops to jump through" must come within 45 days of the submission of that application. One of the core issues that must be determined by HUD is whether this project can stand alone on its own merits. We feel that this is unclear. While Mr. Arnold feels there is a market for high-end near-lake apartments, his nearest competitor (The Haven) is running only an 85% occupancy rate. The Marina Bay Apartments would only add more supply to a depressed market. It is our understanding that the FHA loan would be "non-recourse," meaning that there is no further financial commitment (other than money already spent) by Mr. Arnold should the project go "south." In other words, if the apartment complex failed financially

or for some reason was not finished, Mr. Arnold could walk away without having to repay the FHA loan. HUD would then assume the property to do with as they deemed. This possible “unknown” is probably the most disconcerting issue that faces our Members. Many have also voiced their opinion as to this use of taxpayer money.

This is just a synopsis of where we currently stand. There are other issues/avenues we are pursuing, but these are the most significant. We continue to proceed, but we do need your help in finding the answers to these questions. If you would like to learn more or help us in any way, please come to the Mon. Oct 4 meeting of BDFCA at 6:30 PM at the Community Center at Ballentine Park.

Thank you,  
Ken Tallman  
President  
Ballentine-Dutch Fork Civic Association