



Fee Fears Keep Vendors Away

Permit Requirement Creates Stir At Market

BY EMMA COLEMAN

The Lexington Farmers Market on Dec. 1 was a “ghost town.” Several regular vendors were not there.

“They were told they could not come. And as market manager, I had to be the one to tell them that,” said Mitch Wapner, owner of Paradox Farm. “The commissioner of revenue told me that any non-farmer vendor was not allowed to be here unless they have a peddler’s permit.”

On Nov. 18, Lexington Commissioner of Revenue Karen Roundy got a phone call.

“Someone called our office and requested a business license to sell baked goods at the Lexington Farmers Market,” Roundy said in a memo to Lexington City Council. “My deputy filled out a Zoning Approval for City of Lexington Business Licenses form and gave it to Arne Glaeser on Nov. 19.”

Roundy called the interested baker and “left a voice message indicating a peddler’s business license would be needed and the amount would be \$500, which was only good for the calendar year.”



AN AREA RESIDENT signs a petition to urge City Council to reconsider the peddler’s permit requirement for vendors at the Lexington Farmers Market, which was without a number of its usual vendors last week. (Emma Coleman photos)

Then, on Nov. 22, Roundy said she discovered via the farmers market’s Facebook page that unlicensed peddlers were selling at the market.

“I called Mr. Wapner and advised the vendors who were not

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farmers could not sell at the Lexington Farmers Market without a business license,” Roundy said in the memo. “I informed him a peddlers business license would be required by each vendor, which cost \$500 per calendar year.”

The licenses aren’t prorated. Any vendor who qualifies as a peddler according to city code but wished to continue participating in the market would have needed to pay \$500 in November and again in January.

Wapner said that about a quarter of the market’s regular vendors have been told they qualify as peddlers and cannot participate without a license.

“There are five vendors in particular that were not able to come according to what the commissioner of revenue had identified as nonfarmers,” he said Tuesday.

Rumors began to float around the city. Some members of the community believed vendors were being fined for selling their goods without a peddler’s permit.

“We’re not fining anyone,” Mayor Frank Friedman said last Friday. “What’s ambiguous is the victimization of these kind people who are a part of the community of the farmers market and how to navigate the laws that require the license for the next couple of weeks.”

It was also rumored that vendors were given a one- or two-week grace period in which they could sell their goods without a peddler’s permit. But City Manager Jim Halasz said no formal grace period was granted.

“There was nothing proposed to me like that,” the city manager said. “When this question was addressed to the mayor and myself, it was the day before the market, on a Tuesday. And since the vendors had to understand whether they should show up the next day, we said, ‘We’re not going to try and do anything about tomorrow. They can show up.’ The ones that didn’t have licenses. Because we didn’t have answers. We hadn’t researched this yet.”

But Roundy said she has to do her job as an enforcer of city law, which is “very specific about what a peddler is,” she said Friday.

According to Lexington city code, a peddler is defined as “any person who shall carry from place to place any goods, wares or merchandise and offer to sell or barter the same, or actually sell or barter the same.” Peddlers are also “all persons

who do not keep a regular place of business, whether it be a house of a vacant lot or elsewhere, open at all times in regular business hours and at the same place, who shall offer for sale foods, wares and merchandise.”

The code excludes from this definition “those who sell or offer for sale in person or by their employees ice, wood, charcoal, meats, milk, butter, eggs, poultry, fish, oysters, game, vegetables, fruits or other family supplies of a perishable nature or farm products grown or produced by them and not purchased by them for sale.”

Roundy said this means vendors at the market who do not own a farm are peddlers.

“They don’t have a formal place of business, and they’re coming there to sell their goods,” she said. “It’s definitely a peddler, which in Lexington’s code is a \$500 fee.”

Peddler’s license fees in neighboring municipalities are similar. In Buena Vista, the cost of a peddler’s permit is also \$500, according to the city’s website. In Rockbridge County, it’s \$300.

While Staunton also requires its business owners to have appropriate licenses and pay associated taxes, its farmers market operates differently than Lexington’s.

Market manager Ashley Malcolm told The News-Gazette last week that producers who submit an application and are approved as vendors and abide by the market’s rules can sell their goods at the market without a business license.

Halasz said Lexington could certainly consider a similar agreement. In the last couple of weeks, city staff have not been able to locate any written agreement between the city and the Lexington Farmers Market.

“I’ve not been able to find it, nor can Mitch,” Halasz said. “I think there was just an expectation of what the farmers market would do for our community. I’ve not been able to find anything. Jani Hostetter, the city clerk of Council, hasn’t been able to find anything here in the office. If it’s written down somewhere, we don’t know where it is.”

The earliest record of the modern Lexington Farmers Market in The News-Gazette’s archives is dated December 2001. That month, a former City Council unanimously approved a request to close Washington Street between Jefferson Street and Lee Street from about 1 to

6 p.m. every Wednesday beginning May 1, 2002, and through October 1, 2002.

Wapner said that since then, no producer or peddler has ever been asked to present a business license to become a vendor.

“For the last 19 years, the city has not asked any of our vendors for licenses, whether they’re farmers or not,” he said.

Kereshmeh “Kelly” Kashefian, who owns Kelly’s Persian Food, has been selling her baked goods at the Lexington Farmer’s Market since 2016. She said she has not been asked to pay for a peddlers license until now.

“Nobody told us,” she said.

Kashefian said Roundy called and emailed her late last month to tell her she couldn’t continue doing business in the city without a peddler’s permit.

“The commissioner of revenue sent me an email and left the message for me. ‘Stay at home. Save your trip. Don’t come to the market. You are not allowed to sell.’ It’s not a very friendly way of talking to somebody,” Kashefian said. “She wrote in her email, ‘I discovered that you sell...’ I mean, I didn’t keep any secrets from the people during these years. I’m open to everybody, my customers. Everybody knows it was my life. I didn’t hide anything.”

Roundy said she wanted to help vendors.

“I had told them, ‘You may want to think about maybe not doing any more this year, and then come in in January, so that way you’re saving yourself.’ Because I’m the one who brought that up to them. I’m just trying to help them,” Roundy said. “It’s not that I don’t want them to be there, because I love businesses in Lexington. But it has to be fair for everyone. It has to be fair. You have the brick and mortar people that are paying for their rent, their utilities, and everything. And then if someone comes, and they’re selling a similar product, right there, it isn’t right. I have to make sure everybody is doing what the code says.”

Roundy said that enforcing peddler’s permits is driven primarily by complaints.

“I don’t walk the streets. I’m not going to be on the corners looking for people peddling,” she said. “However, I’ve had it on the weekends where people have called and said, ‘Hey, so-and-so is selling stuff on the corner,’ where I have to go down. I don’t have the resources to have someone on the street to find everything that’s going on.

However, whenever someone calls, or if I get a complaint, I have to act.”

Roundy said nothing would have changed if the interested vendor hadn’t called her office looking for a business license.

“I wouldn’t even know anything about it,” she said.

Kashefian said that what happens at the market should stay at the market.

“I think if something happens at the market, everybody should talk to the market manager, Mr. Mitch, not City Hall,” she said. “Mr. Mitch does everything for the market, so he knows the rules and regulations.”

But Wapner understands that the farmers market has to comply by city regulations.

“We are the city of Lexington Farmers Market,” he said. “I’m not trying to divorce ourselves from the city by any means. And I think we should be compliant with the city. I think the city, on the other hand, should continue business the way they have for the last 19 years.”

The market manager said that “this whole blow-up was a mistake on the city’s part.”

“Mayor Frank Friedman used an analogy that this is similar to a burst water line, and no one should look for blame, and, you know, these things happen,” Wapner said. “And my comment was, ‘That’s a bad analogy.’ Think of it more like the power company who cuts the power line and deprives their customers of service, and they need to do everything in their power to make it right as fast as possible.”

Tantivy Farm owner and former interim market manager Brian Ross started a petition requesting City Council reconsider the fee at the market on Dec. 1. Seven pages had been filled with signatures by vendors and market visitors by about 10:30 a.m. that day. He anticipated making the petition available at the market today, Dec. 8.

“We’re hoping that we can just get their attention and say, ‘Look, all these people think this is ridiculous,’ rather than get confrontation about it,” Ross said. “They need to think it out. It’s such an old rule of law.”

The lavender farmer said the fee is a hefty one, even for an established businessman and farmer like him.

“I couldn’t do it, not this time of year,” he said. “If they just said for me to set up is \$500, I’d have said, ‘No. I’m sorry.’”

Friedman said the city is working as quickly as it can to find a solution.

“Jim and Mitch are working on solutions for short term and long term endeavors,” Friedman said Friday. “But no one’s allowed to operate a business without a business license. Those are the laws. I’m always mindful of blue rules and red laws. Blue rules we can bend and contort and make exceptions for. Laws, we don’t break those.”

Halasz said the solution won’t be found easily, though.

“You have to think these things through,” he said. “Our biggest challenge and the most important issue is working through this and treating everyone equally and fairly. We want to do that with the vendors who are selling, who have sold and would like to continue to sell their baked goods. And we want to be fair to all of our businesses, too. Whatever change we make, we have to make sure everyone’s considered.”

The city manager said the commissioner of revenue has to be considered when making changes, too. Some City Council members have already expressed an interest in charging peddlers for their permits on the date their permit was issued, instead of every calendar year.

“I will work with Karen on that to make sure that we can put into place, whatever that structure is, a license that she could administer properly,” Halasz said.

Halasz said he expects to discuss the farmers market with City Council at its regular meeting Dec. 16. A request to waive peddlers permit fees for market vendors was submitted to Halasz by Wapner on Dec. 1. It is still on the table.

“We could discuss solely the waiver of the business license going forward,” Halasz said, “but you really have some other issues that are peripheral. Who should be at the farmers market? Are we waiving the fees for t-shirt artisans? There are people who consider that their art or them to be an artist. Do we want it there? We ought to look at those questions carefully before we give a carte blanche approval.”

Wapner submitted a similar waiver request on Dec. 1 for the Holiday Market on Dec. 8. The process for its approval could not be completed in one week.

“There wasn’t enough time with a one day notice to put something together for Council,” Halasz said. “It’s not fair to the other businesses,

who also pay their business license and compete to have a decision made or discussion of decision without good notification.”

But Wapner said the market’s regular vendors, including those who don’t have a peddler’s permit, anticipated being there.

“At this moment, we did not have any extra craft vendors signed up for the Holiday Market. So, it’s not an issue for them. For our regular vendors, everyone’s planning on showing up tomorrow, barring weather,” he said Tuesday.

Kashefian said she planned to sell her Persian baked goods at the holiday event. But she’s not sure she’ll pay \$500 for a license come January.

“I have no idea,” she said. “I should wait and see what Mr. Mitch will tell us. Mr. Mitch is a best friend for the market. He does everything for the market and supporting the market and keeping it alive. So, whatever Mr. Mitch tells me, I will totally agree with him.”

But the baker does think the fee for the license is “expensive.”

“I’m a vendor. I just come over there every Wednesday from 7:30 to 1:00. That’s all,” she said. “Because I’m a breast cancer survivor, I come on Tuesday as well for just visiting my doctor. That’s all. So, I don’t know why I should pay \$500 for a license. I don’t have a restaurant. I don’t have a house to live in there. I live in West Virginia. I live in Lewisburg.”

Kashefian said she’ll miss being in town later this month.

“People over there are so friendly, so polite and so supportive, and I really enjoy my time over there,” she said. “I really missed the market last week, I will miss it the two last Wednesdays of December, but who knows in the future. We’ll see. We should keep our fingers crossed.”

“The non-farming vendors contribute to the diversity and vibrancy of the market,” Wapner said. “There are lots of folks who come here to buy a loaf of bread and then come by my stand and buy a pumpkin, or pick up a pet treat and go buy some tomatoes. It’s intertwined. If you had 20 vendors here all selling tomatoes, you would not have a happy public. They want diversity. They want a vibrant market. And it’s in the city’s own interest to have a vibrant downtown farmers market.”



LOCAL YOUTHS watch Wes Ryan, a sophomore at Rockbridge County High School, perform a jump off a metal ramp at the Lexington skate park in late August. City staff announced earlier this month that the city would provide \$5,000 in maintenance funds to repave the space. Other fundraising efforts for park improvements are already under way. (Emma Coleman photo)

Growing Skateboarding

City, Supporters Work To Revitalize Park

BY EMMA COLEMAN

Wes Ryan is a sophomore at Rockbridge County High School. He likes to skateboard, so much that he attended a skate camp this past summer in Woodward, Pa. But his ability to grow as a skater is limited in Lexington.

“Once you get to a certain point in skating, once you sort of progress, there’s just so much you can do here. And some of the stuff here, you just can’t skate it,” he said in an interview with The News-Gazette at Lexington’s skate park last month.

“This thing doesn’t grind at all,” Ryan said as he pointed to a piece of equipment. “There’s only like one trick you can actually do on that. There’s a lot of just rust here. This thing hardly slides. This ramp is rusted. If you fall on it, you’d probably get tetanus or something.”

Ryan is one of several local residents calling for improvements to the city’s skate park, originally built adjacent to the city swimming pool in 1997.

“Skateboarding is like the only sport in Lexington that doesn’t have a facility where you can actually really practice it,” Ryan said. “I mean, I guess it does, but there’s only so much you can do here. If it was repaved, and it had just a few really good things, like maybe three or four obstacles, but they were actually skate-able, it would be perfect.”

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Skateboarding

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Lucky for Ryan and his fellow skaters, the park may soon get the sought-after makeover. City Manager Jim Halasz said at Lexington City Council's meeting Sept. 16 that he and Public Works Director Jeff Martone intend to set aside some funds to resurface the space.

"Of course, we all know that there is money that was put in reserve for the skate park maintenance several years ago from the fundraising," Halasz said. "And that was about \$5,000."

According to meeting minutes, in April 2012 Council unanimously agreed to "appropriate \$5,000 from the Contingency Fund for repair work to be done at the skate park."

The following October, as efforts to repair equipment at the park began, public works employees found that the pieces were not salvageable and removed them from the park. Fundraising efforts by skate park advocates continued, but the appropriated \$5,000 remained untouched – until now.

"Jeff and I met with proponents of improvements to the skate park, and their No. 1 priority is resurfacing the asphalt base of the park," Halasz said Sept. 16. "As Jeff and I looked at the cost of that, and that being their No. 1 priority, they indicated they would do additional fundraising, and if that is the case, we believe we can, with that money that's reserved for the skate park, resurface that park."

Mary Harvey-Halseth, a former City Council member and Lexington resident who has advocated for the skate park's maintenance since its inception, confirmed the city manager's comments.

"If more funds are needed, we will reach out for assistance by fundraising for that," Harvey-Halseth said in an email last week.

"We'll try and get that done later this fall when our paving folks come back," Halasz said.

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Several fundraising efforts for the park are already under way. Lance Branham, another local skateboarder who organized the Greater Rockbridge County Skateboarder Coalition through Facebook, is selling stickers to raise funds for park-related projects.

"One of the first things that almost anyone that becomes a skater, or a biker, or something like that," Branham said in an interview Aug. 13, "the first thing you buy is a sticker, kind of representing what you what you think is cool. And I was like, 'Okay, as a way to get another part of the community in here, let's hold an art contest for a logo for what we're doing.' And we got one entry, but it's beautiful."

The sticker features a deer with a skateboard in its antlers, backed by a sunrise over mountains and encircled by the

Coalition's name. The stickers cost \$2 each.

Branham said in a post on the Coalition's Facebook page on Sept. 21 that sticker sales have already raised \$298. The goal is \$2,000.

"I've got 1,000 stickers, so if I can sell us 1,000 stickers, that gives us \$2,000," Branham said Sept. 13. "I have a lot of people asking for t-shirts of the logo. But I'm just kind of waiting a little while until some stickers move and can get some more money off of them to kind of make a move on that."

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The Lexington Police Department is contributing to the fundraising effort, too.

"As part of the police department's enhanced community outreach and eagerness to provide our city's youth with a safe and robust skate park," Police Chief Angela Greene said in an email Sept. 9, "we are vigorously looking at opportunities to partner with local establishments, professionals and grant funding to revitalize this skate park."

"Once we secure a provider for the design and development of this project, we will hold an open community meeting for all interested citizens to relay their vision of Lexington's skate park, in order to construct a venue all citizens will be proud of and enjoy for years to come."

Harvey-Halseth said the coalition, in addition to setting up a GoFundMe page, is working on establishing itself as a non-profit organization.

"I'm working with Washington and Lee University law clinic in establishing our nonprofit," Harvey-Halseth said in an email Sept. 1. "This will help with fundraising and grant-writing efforts for not just the Lexington location of the skate park, but also for Buena Vista and future Rockbridge County locations."

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The coalition is hosting an awareness event at the park on Oct. 30 from 3 to 5 p.m. It will feature skaters, music, a food truck and a community art wall. A can of food for the Rockbridge Area Relief Association food pantry is the cost of admission.

"The lack of visible pieces, the weeds growing up through the asphalt, the removal of the bench and the disrepair of the pavilion will help us in spreading awareness of why it's termed 'the worst skate park in Virginia,'" Harvey-Halseth said in an email Sept. 9.

A video posted on YouTube by the channel McCANN Travels in July 2020 labels the park as the worst of its kind in the state. The video has over 900 views.

"That video, boy, I think that really turned some heads," said Kim Dorey, a Lexington resident with three sons. Her second oldest, Kellan, 14, took an interest in skating earlier this year.

"He kept talking about this skate park, state park, skate park. So, I had to take him up," Dorey said in an interview last month. "I didn't even realize we had one. And when I saw the skate park, it was just kind of pitiful."

The park features a large square of asphalt with a small pavilion in one corner. The open space is dotted with cement and metal blocks and ramps. All wooden structures were removed from the park on Sept. 8.

"The city of Lexington dismantled and removed DIY pieces of equipment from the skate park for safety reasons," Harvey-Halseth said in an email Sept. 9.

"Our concrete blocks from Rockbridge recycling were pushed around by machine rather than picked up and moved, in turn grinding the bottoms down on our already challenged surface. We are a ghost town again," a post on the Coalition's Facebook page said Sept. 8.

The coalition poured a small concrete ramp at the park on Sept. 6, just two days before public works employees removed the park's wooden pieces.

"The forms on the new concrete ramp will come off one day earlier to restore some sense of dignity to the people who use this park as fast as possible," the Facebook post Sept. 8 said. "Skate on."

Park users had long been under the impression that do-it-yourself blocks and ramps were acceptable. But Halasz said that's not the case.

"Obviously, there is a level of liability associated with skateboarding that the city does accept. However, we cannot allow citizens or volunteers to place equipment, play structures, etc. in the skate park or any other park without supervision and approval," Halasz said in an email Sept. 9. "We would not put out home-made swing sets or teeter-totters without being sure they are safe. This is first, a common-sense safety issue, and second, an avoidable liability and financial issue."

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Halasz said that those who believe that City Council and city staff do not hear their pleas for improved skate park conditions are wrong.

"It's not a question of not listening. It's a question of help us understand how important this is and who it's important to, because it's part of our jobs to hear from the community. I love to hear from the community, and I know City Council feels the same way. But I can't meet all the needs, all the desires," Halasz said in an interview Aug. 17. "It's up to the public to help on these things. Those who are advocating, that's, I think, what the definition of advocating means. Let us know."

Halasz said Sept. 16 that the coalition has prepared a list of

65 names and addresses of individuals who are interested in using the Lexington skate park.

But Branham, who skated in Lexington in the early 2000s, during the park's "hay day," said interest in skating in the Rockbridge area is much broader than that.

"I've watched generations and generations of skaters come and go. And the one thing about it is, most of us are all friends. We still respect each other, we still know each other. It's kind of our own little network, and it's bigger than anybody thinks it is," Branham said. "To us, this is the coolest thing in the world, in the universe. And for anybody that has that coolest thing in the universe to them, just replace your passion with this, and it's equal. It's the same. And in this time when many groups of people worldwide are demanding recognition, I don't think we have any reason to be shy about asking for that."

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New Visions For Spotswood

City Receives Four Proposals

BY EMMA COLEMAN

The second round of development proposals for the city-owned property on Spotswood Drive in Lexington is in. Four proposals were presented to

City Manager Jim Halasz by the city's Nov. 1 deadline. Three of those proposals came from the Spotswood Collaborative, a group of local architects, landscapers, engineers and developers.

The group includes Max Ivankov of MaxMark Homes, LLC, Arthur Bartenstein of ABL Landscape Architecture, Heidi

Schweizer and Bruce Schweizer of Schweizer Associates, Perkins & Orrison, Inc., Lee Merrill, and Ben Grigsby.

"They took the full gamut range of single-family housing to townhouses to apartments, and they have a proposal under each category," Halasz said at City Council's regular meeting last week.

The fourth proposal was presented by Edward Gaskin, president of Echelon Resources, Inc.

In January, Gaskin presented Council with an unsolicited proposal for a multi-family housing development for the 3.254-acre portion of the property on the south side of Spotswood Drive. That presentation kick started

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Spotswood

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widespread community discussion about the lot's development.

Before the city-owned property was subdivided in September, it included the land on which the Piovano building sits. The building serves as the Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA) headquarters and the site for The Community Table meals and the voting precinct for the city of Lexington.

With the property subdivided and the Piovano building sold to RARA, 2.365 acres are still available for potential development. But Halasz said he doesn't expect to make any recommendations to Council regarding the proposals from Echelon and the Spotswood Collaborative until 2022.

"The proposals will be reviewed by the planning staff, finance director and myself, and I'm anticipating that I'll have something to you, a recommendation, in January," Halasz said. "We have a system that we used last time around. We'll probably just plug those things into it and look at the differences that emerge, and then recommend to you what proposal seems best for the city."

The first development plan presented by the collaborative features the construction of a "condominium style multi-family community consisting of 48 condominium dwellings with parking accommodations for up to two vehicles per unit," according to the proposal.

The collaborative is offering to purchase the property for the condo project for \$450,000. The collaborative projects that, of its three proposals, this one "has highest net tax benefit for the city and highest probability of generating other associated property and use taxes from projects' owners and residents."

The condo project would take 48 months to complete, from Council's acceptance to the end of construction. The finished condos would cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000 on the real estate market.

The proposal projects that the residences would generate \$127,200 in real estate tax revenue annually for the city, but that comes with a cost to traffic flow.

"Townhomes, apartment and condos generate seven trips per weekday per dwelling unit. This will roughly equal to 336 additional trips per day generated by the proposed development up and down Spotswood Drive, resulting in roughly 168 additional cars per work day at each intersection – Spotswood and Houston and Spotswood and Nelson," according to the proposal. "Further breaking down these numbers using linear mathematics, we arrive at roughly one additional car at each intersection every 9 minutes throughout a given work day."

The second proposal presented by the collaborative puts less stress on the street's intersections. This proposed development features "attached single family community consisting of 20 townhome style single family dwellings with parking accommodations for up to four vehicles per unit," according to the proposal. That means "one additional car at each intersection every 21 minutes throughout a given work day."

The proposed purchase price for the townhouse project is \$325,000. Like the condo project, it would take 48 months from acceptance to the end of construction. But the townhouses would cost more to buyers – between \$350,000 and \$450,000.

The townhouse proposal said the collaborative projects the homes would generate "\$84,800 in real estate tax revenue annually," less than the condo project would.

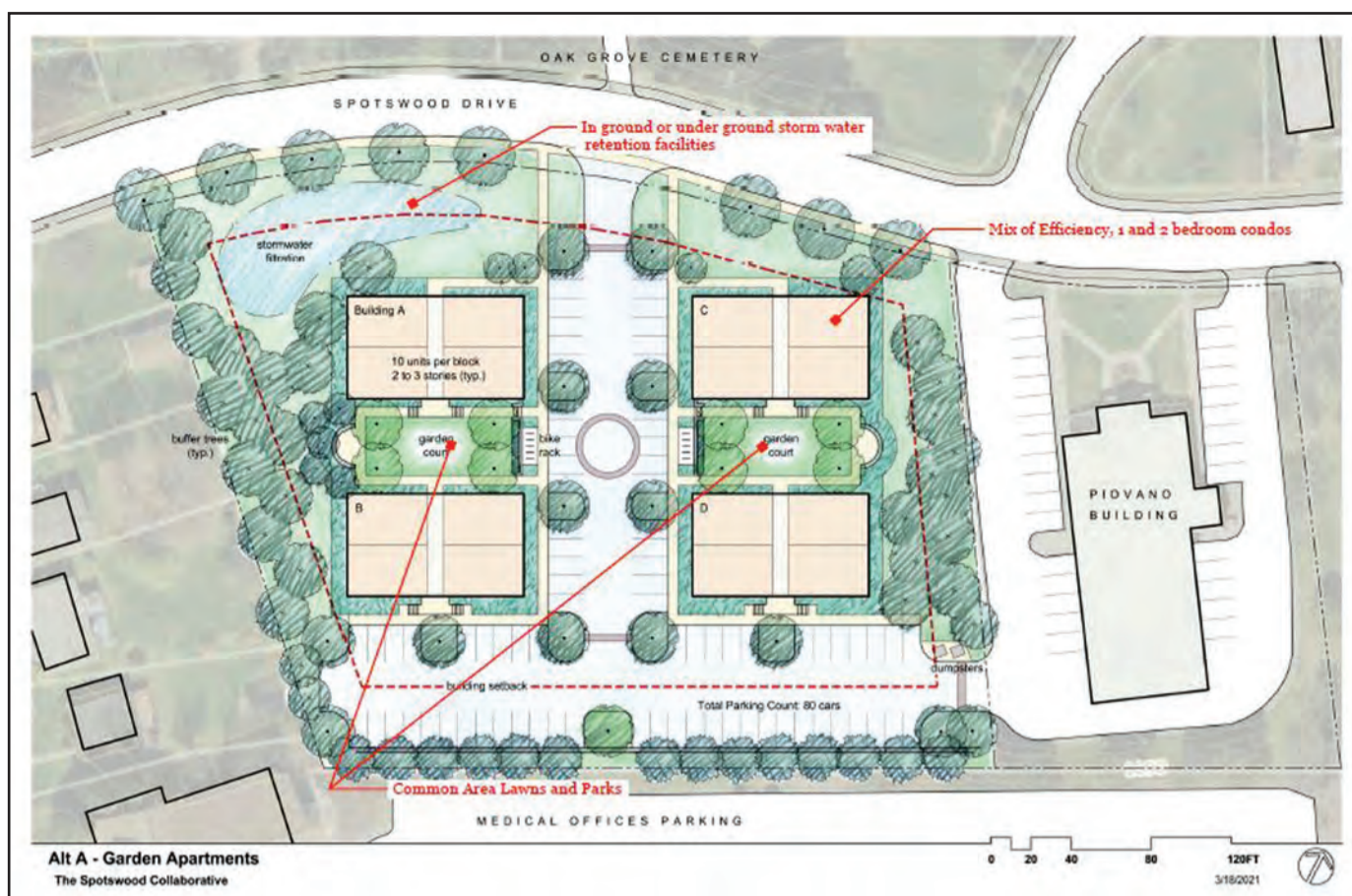
The third proposal presented by the Spotswood Collaborative features the construction of "a single family community consisting of 13 single family dwellings with parking accommodations for up to four vehicles per unit," according to the proposal. It mimics an "already existing neighborhood in the city – the Weatherburn – located on Chamberlain Loop on the west side of town."

The proposed purchase price for the single family project is \$250,000. The project would be completed in 42 months, less time than both the condo and townhouse projects. The proposal estimates the finished homes will cost between \$450,000 and \$550,000.

Of the three collaborative proposals, the single family housing development will generate the least dollars for the city in real estate tax revenue annually – \$68,900. But it puts the least stress on Spotswood Drive's intersections – "roughly one additional car at each intersection every 22 minutes throughout a given work day."

The collaborative repeats in each of its proposals that its "objective remains to work within existing zoning ordinance," which is Residential-Light Commercial (R-LC). But the single family housing project will likely need to be developed with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) designation.

The new proposal presented by Echelon also says that it hopes to maintain the R-LC zoning designation for the property as it is developed, but it will need a conditional use permit



THE FIRST Spotswood development proposal presented by the Spotswood Collaborative, rendered here, features the construction of four small apartment buildings that combined feature 48 dwelling units. The plan identifies a mixture of one and two bedroom condos and 80 parking spaces.

(CUP) in order to complete its proposed project.

The Echelon proposal features the construction of "a mid-rise 3 to 4 story residential rental unit complex" with 62 apartments and 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit.

"These will be 'loft-style' residences, with the targeted client being the area professional and regional retiree," Gaskin said in his proposal letter to Halasz. "Our design will focus primarily on studio and one-bedroom units (some with offices) to allow for smaller or more-affordable units. No more than 30 percent of the units will be two-bedroom units."

Gaskin said that "the site is a challenged property with underground and above-ground utility locations that challenge its redevelopment."

But Echelon prides itself in bringing new life to properties that have been neglected or misused, and it has offered to buy the Spotswood property for \$350,000.

"We have a long track record of successfully redeveloping decommissioned properties. These sites then enjoy a new chapter of relevance to the community and the investments reinvigorate the surrounding neighborhoods," Gaskin said. "Once redeveloped, the city will enjoy new taxes, new residents and a renewed relevance of the Site. Project financial viability is always our priority. We pride ourselves in being able to execute projects, not just talk about them."

Echelon's proposed development could take up to 49 months to complete, from Council's approval to the end of construction. But once it is built, "the project will generate on average \$250,000 in tax revenue to the city each year," according to the proposal.

With 62 new apartment units on Spotswood Drive, the Echelon proposal predicts that during the peak afternoon travel hour, the complex will see 27.28 total trips. That's nearly 30 additional cars on Spotswood Drive during rush hour.

But the new Echelon proposal maintains that it's an improvement from the original proposal presented in January.

"Based on feedback from the community listening sessions earlier this year, our revised proposal now reduces the unit count to 62, lowers the building height, increases the parking ratio beyond the zoning requirements, moves the massing of the proposed building farther away from Houston Street and increases the buffer between the building itself and the Houston



THE PROPOSAL presented by Echelon Resources, Inc., rendered here, features one large apartment building with 62 dwelling units. The building sits adjacent to the Piovano building, increasing "the buffer between the building itself and the Houston Street properties."

Street properties to exceed zoning requirements," according to the proposal. "We think these adjustments address the density, traffic, massing, height and parking concerns raised earlier this year."

The Spotswood Collaborative maintains that all three of its proposals meet goals outlined in Lexington's Comprehensive Plan. It repeats in each proposal that each project "focuses on two important needs of the city – new housing inventory creation and housing availability increase."

The collaborative also maintains that the proposed developments "will generate additional downtown foot traffic, provide housing for people working in the city, create additional employment opportunities, increase consumption of goods and services generated by local business and overall expand local customer base."

The proposal from Echelon also identifies the opportunity to attract employers to the city as a need for housing at the Spotswood site.

"Lexington has a housing shortage that is constraining its economic potential," according to the proposal. "Some workers recruited to work in Lexington may have to live elsewhere, thus denying the city a large portion of the economic benefit that otherwise would come from those new residents."