

In a phone call on March 7 to Alexandra Ananth, City of Newton Planning Department Chief Planner, I verified the information sent to us by Isabelle Albeck in an eBmail about the St. Phillip Neri property

Alexandra stated that Steve Buchbinder was the developer's attorney. The developer was considering one of three ways to develop the property:

1. What could be developed "by right", without zoning relief, which would allow 4 or 5 single family houses.
2. What could be developed by "Special Permit" with a zoning change to the property from single family residential to a different zoning classification (multifamily?). This would allow a prescribed maximum number of units/site area and would allow fairly close zoning control over size and number of units. It would require 15% of the units to be affordable housing.
3. What could be developed by seeking a permit under 40B which would mandate 25% of the units would be affordable.

Alexandra indicated that all three routes of development would require demolition of the Church. She also indicated that the Planning Department was "pushing" for the 2nd option above: the Special Permit with a zoning change. I asked her why the Department wasn't also pushing the 1st option, the 4 or 5 houses that could be built "by right", her answer was that this was such a great location and would fill a need for smaller units for people in Newton. She added that the developer had indicated that he could make money on all three options. She encouraged me to call her before each Area Council meeting for current updates on the progress of the planning process.