

# Athol Daily News

## Work underway on new Athol housing project



*Crews work on the site of the former Riverbend and Bigelow schools, which will become a mix of senior and family housing. PHOTO BY GREG VINE*



*The Riverbend and Bigelow schools are slated to become a new housing development next year called Residence at the Park. PHOTO BY GREG VINE*

ATHOL – Work on the former Riverbend and Bigelow schools to transform the site into a 53-unit housing complex is underway.

The project is being overseen by NewVue Communities of Fitchburg, a nonprofit community development corporation which partnered with the town to expand the availability of mixed-income and senior housing in Athol. Once completed, it will be known as Residence at the Park.

Piles of excavated dirt dot the site along with construction materials and heavy machinery. Some windows have been removed from the old school buildings and workers in hard hats can be seen doing prep work in the interior. Others are busy in various spots around what had been the parking lot for the schools.

NewVue Executive Director Marc Dohan confirmed to the Athol Daily News Monday that the company has received the needed financing to complete the approximately \$32 million project.

“The work they’ve done there so far has really been preparation work; it’s getting the site ready and making sure that it’s secure,” he said. “All of these projects start with selective demolition and things like that to get it all ready.”

Dohan explained that selective demolition includes removal of the blacktop and cleaning out anything still in the school that won’t be needed for the project.

Once completed, the new structure will link both existing buildings. The addition will house 20 units of senior housing and some community space. In the former Riverbend School, each classroom will become an apartment. The former Bigelow School is similar; most classrooms will become an apartment, but one of the units will take up most of two different classrooms.

Of the 53 units being created, there will 20 one-bedroom, 24 two-bedroom, and three three-bedroom units. Twenty of the apartments will be for seniors, 33 for families. Dohan told the Selectboard in December that the rent will range from about \$1,065 to approximately \$1,888.

The project is being funded through a combination of state and federal tax credits, with some additional funds coming in the form of grants, loans and \$400,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds. In 2023, Congressman Jim McGovern secured \$1 million in federal funding for the project.

The general contractor for the project is Aberthaw Construction Company of Lowell. It’s anticipated that work will be completed sometime during the second quarter of 2026.

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