

MINUTES

Walpole Housing Partnership Committee

March 2, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.

Via Zoom

Members present: Andrew Flowers, Audrey Grace, Phil Czachorowski, Willa Bandler, Ben Barrett, Kurt Tommy

Others present: Patrick Deschenes, Shelly Goehring, Sarah Khatib

1. Meeting called to order at 7:23pm.

2. Shelly Goehring of Massachusetts Housing Partnerships (MHP) on funding models for emergency rental assistance programs

MHP has a database of emergency rental assistance programs at the local level, with 80 or more communities, starting in May. A common funding source is Community Development Block Grants, specifically from the CARES Act. A few have used Homes Funds. Many use CPA funds, and some use donations - they set up an account for people to make donations (e.g. Arlington). Some received corporate / foundation donations. Housing Trusts kicked off the programs. Most used CPA. Some may have had payment in lieu or IZB funds.

Management of programs: it's suggested that communities not try to manage these funds themselves; most have some outside agency managing them. A few managed in-house because of capacity (Waltham, Cambridge), but a majority used a regional body. In many cases, they reached out to non-profits in the area to manage the funds.

Application process: some use a lottery, others use an application process. Some start with a lottery and continue to collect applications, if there were additional funds they distribute them that way. Slowing down because money has been spent and the state is rapidly ramping up capacity to allocate funds across the state. They are working out a plan to distribute that Federal Aid.

Pointing out to communities that given the limited local resources, it may be smarter to direct people to Federal resources instead of using local funds to duplicate.

Westboro is looking at gaps - people who cannot access Federal funds or local / state programs, so they are putting funds in to cover those gaps.

A flyer from SMOC will be advertised on the Town website.

CARES act money set aside for regional partnerships, such as SMOC, specifically for conducting IRMA and RAFT programs. This is a program that is existing currently. Walpole residents can apply for mortgage and rental assistance.

We need to be mindful that many residents have trouble connecting with that agency because of the demand.

There is a flood of applicants and the roll out has been shaky. They went from nominal applications to thousands of applications a week.

- There is a dashboard on the state's website where you can see the increase.
- There are efforts to find other ways to distribute these funds, reach directly to large landlords, subsidized housing, to not just rely on individual tenants.
- Local agencies were able to get money out faster, but there is no obvious funding source in Walpole to do that.
- Suggested that we identify the gaps, like Westboro to more effectively allocate minimal local funds.

HACK on the Cape: majority of applications coming in served by state and new federal funds. They have different funding sources, most being paid by RAFT. SMOC may have the capacity to do this for Walpole - create a one stop shop for people to apply.

Regional Housing Service Organization (RHSO) could be an organization that could manage a local program. There is also Metrowest Collaborative Program Development who is managing multiple programs as well. We can reach out to learn more. MCO is managing some programs - there are a variety of programs with lotteries, applications, etc. that are managing multiple local programs for a regional area.

Look at the EDI program, which also includes information for renters, such as renter's rights and other helpful information.

Andrew asked Pat for information on how we can help - suggested communication about programs and information.

Looking into Regional Housing Service Organization (RHSO) with area towns by this fall.

Shelly suggested reaching out to landlords of rental properties to make sure they are aware of resources and their tenants are. Some communities reached out to gauge the needs of their renters. This could help us get feedback on what is necessary on the ground. Andrew said that Denise Landry is aware of these resources.

Willa asked for an inventory of rental units in town - how do we know who is a landlord? Pat suggested going through the assessor's database as the best step - to check for rental units / multifamily, etc. That way we can capture the majority of rental units. Andrew suggested creating a spreadsheet, which can also be helpful for our future work as well.

3. Introduction of Patrick Deschenes, Community and Economic Development Director for Walpole

Former Assistant Town Planner from Norwood. He has worked with SMOC and considered a feasibility study for an RHSO. He believes that an IZB is a proactive and smart effort for our town.

There is a lot going on with housing in town. We are seeing a lot more with the housing crisis going on in the state. Walpole is not alone in the type of projects that are coming in and at the rate they are coming in.

Pat is interested in the master planning process. He believes that a balanced community is a strong community. He is interested in learning more about where the town would like to be in 10 years and help to facilitate that. Re: zoning bylaws - he is still reviewing it and learning what we are working with.

4. Joint committee on inclusionary zoning with Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals; VOTE three (3) representatives

Sarah proposed the PB sponsoring the IZB. It was discussed. Phil suggested a joint committee with WHP, PB, and Zoning Board, which passed 3-1-1. Select Board directed to create this committee.

Andrew is going before the ZBA on March 4. If they so choose to participate, they can send two members to the committee.

Phil shared that this is the best way to move forward. We had a majority supporting the IZB at the Fall 2020 Town Meeting, but there was a lot that came up at the last minute. Sarah suggested ways to remedy the IZB, so now we have a clear path to move forward. This will show that committees can work together, as it should be for the good of the town.

Audrey suggested that the joint committee establish ground rules to move forward together.

WHP Representatives: Willa, Andrew, and Kurt.

- Motion by Phil, second by Ben.
- UNANIMOUS 5-0-0.

Andrew will attend the ZBA meeting and follow up with a memo to the Planning Board on the status of the committee and next steps.

Sarah recommended that we set the charge of this committee (goals, landmarks, deadlines, etc.). Andrew has a plan to do so and a timeline. Audrey recommended making clear what the charge / mission of the WHP is because there has been a lot of confusion about what we do. Andrew will work on a draft to review and submit in time for the Planning Board's internal deadline.

5. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes with edit regarding notation about the next meeting from February 5, 2020 was made by Phil and seconded by Ben.

- UNANIMOUS 5-0-0.

6. Update on state Housing Choice zoning bylaw changes

The WHP should review because there are a few zoning changes recommended in our Housing Production Plan that will only need a simple majority.

Audrey suggested looking at the HPP to see what would fall under this unless a zoning bylaw rewrite is coming up soon. Andrew shared that it wouldn't be until after the year of doing the master plan. Audrey will do a review and work with Pat to share where we can make interventions. The WHP will not write the zoning regs; but will help with advocacy and education. Phil agrees that we should move forward.

Pat shared that the new legislation requires MBTA communication to designate areas near trains as multifamily by right. Phil reported that CHAPA recommended waiting on state guidance.

7. Committee membership recruitment

One challenge we have is that there are no renters represented on our committee. Willa suggested sending out a mailer to renters once we have the list of rental properties inventoried. Andrew has been working on recruiting renters as well as someone who lives in affordable / subsidized housing through community contacts. Andrew and Willa will work on renter recruitment.

Andrew recommended that the Select Board modernize the committee application process in some way.

8. Old Business

No old business.

9. New business

No new business.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 8:28

Willa motion, Phil second.

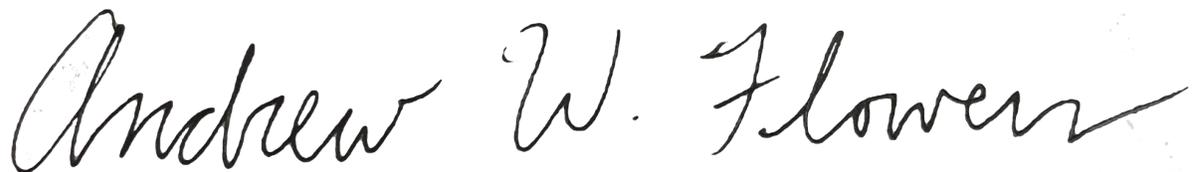
UNANIMOUS

Respectfully submitted by:

Audrey Grace

Minutes approved on: 5/4/2021

Chairperson's Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew W. Flowers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.