

MINUTES

Walpole Housing Partnership Committee

June 20th, 2018 – 7:30 P.M.

Town Hall, 135 School Street

Room 112

Members Present: Willa Bandler, Philip Czachorowski, Andrew Flowers,
Audrey Grace, George Hodges, Jeanne Nickola, Michael Teeley
Others Present: Community Development Director Tim Higgins

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:31 PM

2. New Members

George Hodges joins the Committee. Mr Hodges states that he is a realtor and landlord who keeps his rental units affordable voluntarily.

3. Approval of Minutes from April 18th and May 3rd Meetings

Discussion regarding whether the opinions of Committee members and others present should be represented in minutes, or only the general subjects covered; more members feel that it may be helpful to build institutional memory by representing opinions than are opposed, though no formal vote taken.

A motion to approve the minutes from April 18th and May 3rd was made by Mr Czachorowski and seconded by Mr Teeley.

VOTE: 5-0-1.

4. Housing Production Plan

Ms Grace and Mr Flowers talked with Tim Higgins and Manisha Bewtra from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, and Ms Bewtra offered feedback on Mr Higgins' RFP. Mr Higgins has incorporated those; today (6/20) Ms Bewtra offered additional edits, to be incorporated before releasing the RFP.

Mr Czachorowski wants to know whether the \$10,000 we have available is sufficient; Mr Higgins says he asked former contractor if they'd be interested in updating it for that amount and they said yes. Mr Higgins says it's a tight budget but thinks it can be done; the DHCD estimated \$30,000, but expected a lot more public participation. Ms Bandler thinks if we don't have public participation, there's no point. Ms Grace wants more robust areas where committee members can participate. Mr Czachorowski wonders if we should ask the town for more money; Mr Flowers thinks it would be more prudent to just get the HPP done with the resources we have available. No motion is made to request funds, so the RFP will go out based on the funds available.

Ms Grace notes that gender is a protected class in MA; Mr Higgins will add that on p.7.

Mr Czachorowski asks who is "the Town" as far as approving proposals; Mr Higgins will change wording to "the Committee", aka this committee.

A public forum attended by the consultant is a required part of the process; the committee discusses whether it should happen near time of Town Meeting, before or after. Mr Teeley thinks we need to have the forum before Town Meeting to educate RTMs about the process; Ms Grace notes that, regardless of timing, it has to happen after the draft is ready—maybe as part of task 5, unless it is broken out as a separate task. Ms Bandler says that we should all bring ideas re publicizing the public forum to next

meeting; Ms Nickola recommends that we pass out flyers to school children to bring home to parents.

Ms Grace wants to know if we can do an informal survey of town residents; consensus is that we do not have the resources at this time. Mr Flowers suggests maybe we could piggyback on town census in January. Mr Higgins says we might also be able to send out a survey with Water & Sewer bills. Ms Grace would like to build an email list of interested residents to. Mr Flowers says we need to come back to this later.

Wrapping up the discussion, Mr Higgins says he feels the RFP is ready to be sent out the following day with the changes indicated above; the committee will select a consultant at the July 19th meeting. Additional meetings regarding the HPP will take place throughout the fall, so that the plan will be done by December (when the current plan on file expires).

Mr Czachorowski moves to send out the RFP with the changes noted above. Ms Nickola seconds.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUS.

5. Inspection of Existing Affordable Units

Ms Bandler reports, after a conversation with Board of Health Director Robin Chapell, that a conflict exists wherein residents are reluctant to report violations to the Board of Health because of the scarcity of affordable units and the risk that they might be evicted or, if they ever needed to move, such action would prevent other landlords of subsidized units from choosing to rent to them.

Ms Grace says our first course of action needs to be to find out what is within our ability to do about the situation.

Mr Teeley asks if this is actually a problem, or just theoretically; Mr Czachorowski and Ms Nickola report that both know personally of cases where it has been, and residents have lived with nonfunctioning drains, broken windows, mold problems, etc, rather than risk making a report. Mr Hodges says no landlord would actually try to evict a tenant or exact retribution based on this type of action, so people shouldn't be afraid to complain.

Mr Flowers says our first steps should be to talk more with the Board of Health about this matter, and also to explore enforcement mechanisms available to us/used elsewhere to handle this issue. Ms Bandler will look into methods used in the town of Coatesville, PA, where a friend has reported that all rental units are inspected annually.

6. Appointment of Additional Committee Members

Mr Flowers reports that Board of Selectmen secretary Cindy Berube contacted him asking whether current members of this committee would be in favor of the BoS appointing up to 4 more members (current membership is 7, but can be as many as 11), so he said he would ask the other members for input.

Ms Grace says scheduling is harder with more people, so she would be in favor only if they brought specific, relevant expertise.

Mr Czachorowski is undecided.

Ms Bandler is in favor only if any new members actually live in or are eligible for affordable housing.

Mr Hodges and Mr Teeley both think we need more members.

Mr Flowers proposes that we add 2 more members as a middle ground, but only if they have demonstrable expertise/diverse perspectives; Mr Czachorowski notes that that's hard to quantify.

Ms Grace notes the need to make sure the BoS doesn't appoint an overall even number of members, for voting reasons.

7. New Business

Ms Nickola has talked to Cindy Stumpo about appearing on an affordable housing-related episode of her radio show, "Tough as Nails", on WBZ1030. Potentially other members of the committee could also appear, if there is interest.

8. Reference

Documents presented:

- Housing Production Plan RFP

9. Next meeting to be held July 19th at 7:00 PM, in conjunction with the Planning Board

The following meeting is planned for August 29th at 7:00 PM.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 PM

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr Czachorowski and seconded by Ms Grace
VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUS.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Willa Bandler

Minutes Approved by Committee on:

9/12/18

Chairperson Signature:

Andrew Flowers