

NEWTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Newton Housing & Community Development Program

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April 9, 2008 MEETING MINUTES DRAFT

Date: April 9, 2008
Time: 7:45 a.m.
Location: City Hall, Room 202

Members Present: Phil Herr, Josephine McNeil, John Wilson, Deb Crossley, Andrew Franklin, Lynne Sweet, Bart Lloyd and Peter Macero

Visitors: Myra Tatenbaum (for the League of Women Voters)

Staff: Steve Gartrell

Minutes prepared for the Housing Partnership by Trisha Guditz, Housing Development Coordinator (from Steve Gartrell notes)

1. February 13 meeting minutes: The minutes from the February Housing Partnership meeting were approved.

2. Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership: Steve Gartrell reported that the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership had contacted the City to schedule a discussion on affordable housing in Newton. MBHP requested the support and endorsement of the Housing Partnership which the members agreed to provide.

3. 1235 Boylston Street follow up: The members agreed to support the submission of a Local Initiative Program by the City so that the one inclusionary zoning unit can be counted as a Local Action Unit for the purposes of DHCD's Subsidized Housing Inventory.

4. Formation of a Nomination Committee: Phil Herr began the discussion stating the need to initiate the ad hoc nominating committee. The committee needs to talk to the membership and submit names for the chairman and vice chairman positions. He also recommended that the committee work on outreach for possible new members. Phil stated that his term is over (two years) and he will not continue as chair.

John Wilson requested a list of members and their professional affiliations. Steve said that Trisha Guditz will provide.

Lynne Sweet and Josephine McNeil volunteered to serve on the Nominating Committee. Lynne asked the members to contact the committee with recommendations for officers as well as names of individuals who may be interested in becoming members.

Phil said that the vote for a chairman and vice chairman will take place in June.

5. Mission statement: Phil presented the revised mission statement and asked for comments. Since there wasn't a quorum, there could be no vote on the mission statement. Phil highlighted several discussion points including:

- Advisory membership category: Should there be a new category of membership that would include advisors who are non-voting members?
- Existing gaps in professional expertise/experience/demographics: the Housing Partnership should strive to recruit members with different skills and experiences to augment the existing membership. Also, the Housing Partnership should try to broaden its demographic representation.

The members agreed that there should be a new "advisors" category. This discussion followed:

Andy Franklin: Do advisors have to be appointed by the Mayor?

Phil Herr: They don't have to be but I think they should be.

Lynne Sweet: Can existing members become advisors without Mayoral approval?

Phil Herr: We should revise language to allow members to move to an advisory category without Mayoral approval. The other issue is members who miss two and three consecutive meetings. Adding an advisory category may help with these issues.

Josephine McNeil: We should add language allowing members to continue if they are absent. (Trish note: Notes are sketchy here. Josephine, do you remember your comment?)

Andy Franklin: Isn't that the issue with the lack of quorums? We should leave that requirement as is.

Josephine McNeil: I think there needs to be an opportunity to contact the members who miss consecutive meetings. The new chairman should be willing to contact absent members.

Bart Lloyd: Are alternates possible?

Phil Herr: I will follow up with the Law Department.

Peter Macero: I like the idea of a floating membership.

Lynne Sweet: Can members vote in absentia?

Phil Herr: No.

Lynne Sweet: I am concerned if real estate professionals are limited...(Trish note: Lynne: What was your comment?)

Josephine McNeil: The Housing Partnership needs diversity in its membership.

Phil Herr: I question why the League of Women Voters (LWV) is on the list of membership categories.

Josephine McNeil: The LWV is the most engaged organization in the City.

Deb Crossley: The LWV is named to a number of Newton committees.

Phil Herr: Residents of below-market housing are not represented.

Lynne Sweet: It is hard to reach these participants.

Josephine McNeil: The lack of diversity on most City committees including this one is appalling. I will work on this.

Phil Herr: Other comments?

Andy Franklin: We just need clarification on advisory members voting.

Bart Lloyd: Is a quorum lost when a member has to recuse him/herself?

Phil Herr: Yes.

Phil Herr ended the discussion by stating that the members would return to this topic when there was a quorum. He also said that members should inform staff (Trisha Guditz or Margaret Siciliano) if they are going to be absent.

6. 40B: Phil said that there had been a breakthrough with DHCD on the METCO program local preference category for non-resident students attending local schools. Steve Gartrell stated that he will work with the Fair Housing Task Force to revise the guidelines and develop the needs statement required by DHCD.

7. Action Steps: Phil Herr stated that the Housing Partnership might consider taking a more active role in initiating housing actions in the City. He said that the members could look at the list of actions that need attention and select some to start moving forward. He also said, however, that starting momentum would be a major effort. Initiating action could benefit to the City, increase visibility for the Housing Partnership and enable the members to get involved in new ways than they have in the past.

Deb Crossley: Would the members work in individual committees or as a whole?

Phil Herr: Small groups to work on longer term actions.

Lynne Sweet: I have done something similar in other communities. We consolidated information from all the plans in the communities. Local committees were then given control over the action items. Can this work be done by one committee?

Phil Herr: Engaging other people to get involved is a real benefit. We resisted getting consultants involved in the development of the comprehensive plan. It depends if the work can get done (through volunteer effort). Small groups would have to decide how to proceed.

Myra Tattenbaum: This is exciting to think about. The Housing Partnership could use this (small group) process as a way to recruit people. This is a good place to start.

Deb Crossley: Most items require regulatory change. People need to understand how difficult it is to revise the inclusionary zoning ordinance, for example.

John Wilson: We should extend ideas out that people might grab a hold of. For example, analyzing a CDBG neighborhood where there are vacant areas with potential.

Myra Tattenbaum: People will join in if they think it will be effective.

Phil Herr: The Zoning Task Force was dealing with small items and their work became unfocused. Focussing on housing might be a good trigger for other change. For example, it only took a year and a half for green housing to become part of development proposals and requirements.

Lynne Sweet: Does the City have a Planned Production Plan?

Phil Herr: No, the Planning and Development Department is opposed to it. The function of the PPP is to reduce threshold for stopping 40B. This City is generally not opposed to 40B. The housing plan functions better than a PPP.

John Wilson: We need something more meaty than just a plan.

Phil Herr: That's what this is—specific tasks.

Deb Crossley: We are trying to give the City some tools toward active accomplishments.

John Wilson: We need to come up with financial resources or this is not going to happen.

Deb Crossley: The action proposals need to address this issue.

Phil Herr: We need to add advocacy, as well.

8. Changes to the Housing Office: Steve Gartrell announced that the Newton Housing Rehabilitation Fund (NHRF) and the Housing Development staff were merging and with the retirement of Mike Duff, NHRF Manager, Trisha Guditz was asked to consolidate the divisions. The Housing Office will also move to City Hall (Planning and Development Department) in the summer.

The meeting was adjourned.

F: HD/NHP/Minutes/2008/April 2008

