

NEWTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Newton Housing & Community Development Program
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The location of this meeting is handicap accessible, and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons requiring assistance. If you have a special accommodation need please contact Robert Muollo, Jr. at 617-796-1146, or via email at rmuollo@newtonma.gov, or via TDD/TTY at 617-796-1089.

August 12, 2009 Meeting Minutes Approved October 14, 2009

Members present: Phil Herr, Chairman, Deb Crossley, Henry Korman, Bart Lloyd, Josephine McNeil, Lynne Sweet, Dan Violi, and John Wilson

Visitors: Alice Ingerson (City of Newton), Myra Tattenbaum (resident)

Staff: Robert Muollo, Jr., Amy Yuhasz, Kathleen Cahill

Draft minutes prepared for the Housing Partnership by Robert Muollo, Jr., Housing Development Planner

1. New housing priorities for CPA - Alice Ingerson

After being introduced to the NHP by Phil, Alice explained the goals and challenges of the CPA allocation for housing development. The group discussed the current economics and its influence on housing, the challenges of the process and length of time for CPA approval, especially for smaller projects, and the dissemination of available CPA information for developers.

Citing # 4 in the Fiscal 2010-12 Community Preservation Funding Priorities, Phil asked others to think about ways to shorten the time required for CPA approval, with one potential way being to set sights on funding programs, rather than projects. The NHP mentioned an Affordable Housing Trust Fund or Community Land Trust as two potential programs.

The NHP then discussed how and where scarce resources should be sought for an affordable housing trust fund, especially in the current state of the market.

Deb asked if it was appropriate to have the NHP lead a feasibility study for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and Alice said she believed this would indeed help.

Deb and Phil recommended that a fact sheet should be developed before a feasibility study and Phil suggested that the topic be put on the NHP agenda for next year. Lynne offered to look into utilizing her assistant, a student at Tufts, in conducting a feasibility study for an affordable housing trust fund in Newton.

The NHP decided to hold an organizational meeting to define a scope for an affordable housing trust fund feasibility study and submit it to Tufts for their consideration. Josephine, Dan, and Lynne volunteered to meet and discuss a scope for submittal to Tufts.

2. *Ideas on the progress of 192 Lexington Street Development - Alice Ingerson*

Alice gave an overview to the NHP regarding the affordable housing development at 192 Lexington Street, including its current standing in the CPA approval process and the next steps needed for full approval. The NHP asked what the issues have been surrounding the project, to which Alice explained that they have included an increase in density, additional school children in area schools, and an environmental issue.

The NHP discussed who should be contacted with the purpose of garnering support for the project. Josephine felt that the issue of additional school children in the community disregards moral principles and would like to include the Newton Clergy Association in order to build support around this concern.

The NHP will work on garnering support for the affordable housing development at 192 Lexington St. Alice also informed the Partnership of an updated CPA application, which can be found online.

3. *Discussion of the Housing Needs Assessment portion of the FY11-15 Consolidated Plan*

Kathleen and Amy of the Planning and Development Department were introduced to the NHP and gave an overview of Newton's Consolidated Planning process and summaries of the draft Housing Needs Assessment component of the plan and draft CAPER report. Phil opened the floor to the NHP for any questions regarding the draft Housing Needs Assessment and CAPER summaries.

Lynne was surprised to find that staff felt that the Needs Assessment is missing a non-special needs affordable housing component portion, as she noted that prior focus groups included a reasonable diversity of stakeholders.

Josephine discussed the need for services, resources, and case management for the low-income population.

The NHP discussed voucher availability after Dan asked how many vouchers are available in the City, if some vouchers can be changed to project-based to increase the amount of total vouchers available within the City, and how the NHA can achieve this. According to Amy, Jon Hacker, NHA Executive Director, said there was not enough supply of project-based vouchers to convert available vouchers to project-based.

Henry asked if CPA funds can be utilized as sinking funds for drawdown and/or reserves for developers using inclusionary zoning. Alice said it can be done, but does not know if it has been done in the past.

Henry elaborated on a potential model of CPA funding being used to carry a low-income renter's ability to pay for a while before finally securing a voucher from the NHA.

Bart believed that reducing hard debt was more effective for the developer rather than creating a sinking fund and increasing the subsidy.

Josephine said that it is unlikely to see tax credit deals in Newton, and that although this bridge model may work for the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), it may not be effective with the NHA and Community Preservation Committee.

The discussion then turned to the need for those with no rental subsidy to receive assistance because of the inaffordability of Newton, including an increase in per unit subsidy for those at 50-80% AMI, as very few vouchers currently exist for this range at developments.

Phil said that the 50-80% AMI range is not included in the draft Housing Needs Assessment, but should be addressed because of the high housing costs in Newton.

Dan asked if the City had any information on property rich but asset poor seniors in the City. Kathleen said yes, census data is available on the cost burden for the elderly, but is 6 years old. Kathleen said she will receive updated cost burden data once the next census is complete in 2010.

Suggestions for strategizing the need for the cost burdened senior population included utilizing the Counsel of Aging as a resource and a reverse mortgage program for seniors. Robert explained to the NHP that a reverse mortgage program sponsored by the City of Newton, the Fair Housing Committee, and Lawyers Clearinghouse is scheduled for September 10 at the Newton Senior Center.

Additionally, Amy said that a marketing plan was in development between the City and the Jewish Family & Children's Services for the HPRP and that they are working to get the word out to those at risk of homelessness. A further strategy identified by the NHP included connecting programs and service centers as resources and first steps to dealing with the issue of those at-risk to homelessness.

It was noted that expiring use projects were not addressed in the draft Housing Needs Assessment and that this issue needs to be thought out tactically and the focus should be on projects expiring in 10 years. The NHP identified the need to support existing housing and identify risks surrounding expiring use, such as a decrease in vouchers.

5. *Discussion of our review to come of Chestnut Hill Square.*

Phil stated that at the next meeting he would like the NHP to discuss how they will manage the Chestnut Hill Square application, including the role of the NHP and what they should see from the Chestnut Hill Square developers (see Phil Herr memo entitled "*Chestnut Hill Square materials for the Housing Partnership*" dated 7/28/09 and "*Materials for Housing Partnership Development Reviews*" dated 10/5/09).

6. *Report from the Nominating Committee.*

Lynne spoke on behalf of the Nominating Committee on recruitment efforts. Of the many individuals who were extended invitations, many have expressed prior commitments. However, one gentleman has expressed interest of joining in the future. There will be more information to come.

The meeting was adjourned.