

NEWTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Newton Housing & Community Development Program
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March 10, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Phil Herr (Chairman), Andrew Franklin, Bart Lloyd, Josephine McNeil, Jeanne Strickland, Lynne Sweet, Dan Violi, and John Wilson

Guests: Alderman Leslie Baker, Myra Tattebaum, Eunice Kim

Staff: Robert Muollo, Jr.

The meeting came to order at 7:52 a.m.

1. Review of February minutes

The February 10 meeting minutes were approved.

2. Identifying roles for Newton Housing Strategies and Actions

Phil pointed out that as a result of feedback from the last NHP meeting the draft document needed more specificity regarding the roles of various stakeholders. The revised document, with the roles more clearly defined, was distributed prior to the meeting. The NHP was in agreement with the changes. Dan asked where the document goes next. Phil explained that U-CHAN will vet the document, followed by Housing staff.

3. Call for Nominating Committee volunteers

Phil, Josephine, Jeanne, and Lynne comprise the Nominating Committee. Phil stated the purpose of the Subcommittee will be to define the role of the Chairperson moving forward, consider if the current requirement in the by-laws of 15-20 members be reduced, and consider what professional backgrounds should be sought out. The NHP was asked if they have any ideas for new members. Josephine would like to involve a member of the clergy association.

The Subcommittee will meet on Monday, March 15th. Robert will send current membership information to the Subcommittee members.

4. Recent developments on accessory apartments

Phil reminded members that a letter of support was sent to the Zoning and Planning Committee regarding the potential changes to the accessory apartments ordinance, which is still in the Aldermanic process. Alderman Baker articulated that expanding existing structures to accommodate accessory apartments still needs to be worked out by the Board of Aldermen, and projected that the ZAP Committee will have something to report in either of the next two meetings.

Phil also mentioned that four op-ed articles were in the Newton Tab, each with different viewpoints on the topic.

Dan asked how many illegal apartments currently exist in the City. Alderman Baker believed that about 60 households in 40 units are in the enforcement cycle and that the current administration is mobilizing resources to address safety issues, with the outcome to gauge the extent of the situation in the City. Josephine felt that real estate agents should have to report on an illegal unit. Lynne agreed that real estate agents have knowledge of illegal units, but that they are not obligated to make a report.

Regarding feedback from some community members of the potential increase of school-aged children and college students due to additional accessory apartments, Josephine felt it was immoral to not let households with children into a community. Alderman Baker said there is an obligation to educate the children currently in the community and that decision makers must be aware of the impacts land use policies have on this. Myra and Lynne agreed that it would be helpful to analyze and disseminate the true impacts an increase of these demographics may have on the community.

Dan asked what the assessed value would be if a single family is converted into a two-family unit. Alderman Baker explained that data overtime showed that assessed values of these converted units had varied; some have decreased and some increased. Alderman Baker asked if that if the NHP had any ideas regarding the proposed changes to let him know. Lynne asked if the NHP could be provided with the minutes from the ZAP Committee meeting to gain further insight.

5. Update and report from the Streamlining Affordable Housing Funding Subcommittee

Lynne stated that the goal of the Subcommittee was to define the right mechanism to streamline the funding process, especially for smaller projects that go through the CPA process. Lynne explained that Subcommittee compared multiple mechanisms and their conclusions were that an affordable housing trust fund (AHTF) was the most viable option. Lynne summarized the Subcommittee's concept paper on an AHTF, which contains an introductory and informational synopsis of the roles, structure, and process of creating an AHTF. Lynne acknowledged that many questions were left unanswered for the purpose of having a balanced decision-making process. Lynne asked Alderman

Baker what the next appropriate steps would be. Alderman Baker suggested that articulating the current timing issues when funding housing projects and the matter of Board of Alderman oversight would be helpful in gaining traction for a proposal. Alderman Baker also suggested including information on what other communities have done and also wondered if an appropriate role of an AHTF would be to fund feasibility studies for affordable housing. Next steps include talking to the Chair of the Committee on Community Preservation. The NHP was in support of the AHTF and the concept paper.

6. Other business

No other business was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 a.m.