

Fair Housing Minutes, 2/16/2017
Mimi Hollister, Scribe

Present: Mimi Hollister, Ann Cohen, Ben Day, Lou Meyi and Don Gardner

A letter that Mimi drafted to Cindy Simmons, owner of the multi-unit building on Pleasant St. near Don Davies' home, was reviewed. We are suggesting that if she sells the building, we would have an interest in it for affordable housing. There is a new tax credit program in the state for property owners who wish to contribute property to affordable housing. This letter is to open the door to conversation. Lou suggested that we approach Harborlight and Kurt James for advice about perhaps securing the "right of first refusal" from Ms. Simmons, should she decide to sell.

Considerable discussion ensued about our discouragement with town leadership that all these years, our efforts to create possibilities, pursue funding through CPA, ask for town budget, pursue 40R zoned possibilities etc. have never been supported and often been denied support. If indeed Becky Cutting and John McGinn encourage our securing an intern and doing a town comprehensive study, where will that lead? What value will there be for FHC once done? There was a consensus that we need to raise these issues clearly and insist on some answers. Otherwise, recruiting new members is a waste because there is little to be done. Indeed, having a Fair Housing Committee itself becomes a false front for the town. The meeting with John and Becky that has been postponed for weather and then health reasons should occur before the March meeting. These issues and concerns will be raised with them.

Other ideas: more collaboration with the Housing Authority. Discussion with Lori Ehrlich about what she might do to nudge the town toward the 10% affordable that the state requires and that so far Marblehead has ignored. It was pointed out that a creative developer can find ways to get land for a 40B project – witness Oliver's Pond where the developer bought 3 moderate homes on adjacent lots and put it all together to create a very successful 40B project.