

Fair Housing Committee
Minutes of May 20, 2021 Meeting
Mimi Hollister, Scribe

Present: Debra Larkin, Chair; Mimi Hollister, Scribe; Katie Farrell, Joe Whipple, Frank Evans, Teri McDonough, Kurt James
Guests: Ed Nilsson, Lou Meyi, Kathy Green

Minutes of March 18: approved. The April 20 meeting did not have a quorum so no minutes to approve.

Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee update: no meeting has been held lately.

Discussion on Zoning and Building Codes: Ed Nilsson led this interesting and packed discussion with Kurt James.

Summary of points: In 1989 an incentive zoning by-law was passed by Marblehead that, with Planning Board review for a special permit, would allow up to a maximum of 12 units per acre. This is triple what Marblehead's zoning specifies in 90% of the town where density is a maximum of 4 units per acre. If we could pass at Town Meeting an amendment to reduce a project's minimum lot area from 10 "by right" house lots to 5 "by right" house lots, this would increase the number and feasibility of available parcels that could be developed, and which include 10% affordable units. In other words, what is now a 2.5 acre minimum lot size to utilize the incentive zoning bylaw (10 households x 10,000 sf each = 100,000 sf = approximately 2.5 acres including access road) could be reduced to 1.25 acre (5 house lots x 10,000 sf each = 50,000 sf = 1.25 acres).

Ensuing discussion: Kurt asked why we need a minimum at all. Ed suggested that we have to know the tenor of the time and what will most likely pass at Town Meeting. When developers Ted Moore and Hillary Rockett surfaced, many zoning articles passed to limit development. It's a different time now and hard to read.

Suggestions: Perhaps a citizen's warrant article with endorsement from the Planning Board. Article might be presented, including the important assurance of not changing the fabric of the town.

Accessory units in limited areas could be considered: in-house; add-on; outside 900 sq. ft. max tiny house – such as passed in Salem on current single family lots.

Kurt suggested 2 options: 1) Accessory dwellings, which had support at the HPP public hearings. 2) Re-zoning with the 40R approach: identify places in town where you could do a few multi-units over existing commercial properties.

Incentive zoning by recommended changes: up the number to 5 per acre; require 40B projects to be 20% affordable, rather than 10%; and up the building height limits a bit were identified as a possible plan.

Then there was discussion about Land Trusts and possibly using Affordable Housing Trust Fund for this, but that's for another time.

Kurt noted that we are an MBTA Community because of the bus line, so the earlier 40R study that was very well done might be helpful – discussion of Village Plaza and the Vinnin Square project as possibilities for 40R development.

Agreed that **Kurt and Ed should approach Becky Cutting** and/or the Town Counsel to determine how to proceed: should Fair Housing present to the Planning Board and the Selectmen and Finance Committee a plan? Or should the Planning Board do the study, in which case they need to find funding? Or should the Selectmen put together a Smart Growth Advisory Committee to create a plan?

Actions: 1) Coffin School accepting RFP's soon . Should emphasize affordable housing for this site. Harborlight would definitely be interested in developing a plan.

2) Focus on accessory units in by-law changes.

The ideal is to create affordable housing that doesn't look like it. Artist renderings so that public can better visualize the possibilities is important. Architect involvement very important in public hearings.

Lou reminded that 40B at Oliver's Pond was developed on several single family home lots put together. Attached town homes more marketable than apartments in a large building.

Ed suggested that presenting to the Planning Board is timely so consulting with Becky as to best way to proceed.

Question about Housing Authority properties: lack of any interest noted in the past but Teri suggested revisiting. **Kurt will do that.**

Mimi reported on the CHAPA webinar about “Housing Choice” It covered much of the same ground of the above discussion such as increasing density, looking at existing by-laws that impede variety, converting schools to housing, accessory housing, mixed use with retail on the first floor and housing above. An aging population doesn't need huge homes. Community stake holders need to be engaged. Also architects to interpret the look for the town and renters as well as home owners.

Kathy Green introduced herself again to those not at the last meeting. She will write to the Selectmen asking to replace Karl Renney on this committee. Karl's term is up in June. Kathy is an officer at National Grand Bank in the Mortgage Department. She has been at the bank for 30 years, working her way up from Teller.

Correspondence Update: Kyle Wiley confirmed that the Board of Selectmen received the two letters sent to them from the FHC Co-Chair, Debra Larkin, at a recent meeting of the Selectmen. Therefore, they are aware of the FHC's interest in the land parcel across from the Community Store and the FHC's wish to identify the Equal Opportunity Officer. In addition, Kyle confirmed that (also in the letters) they have received notification of Dirk Isbrandtsen, Co-Chair's, interest in becoming a member of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board and Kyle informed Dirk via email that they will respond further later.

In discussion about the school property, it was noted again that there is community interest and parent preparations are going on to make that into a skate board park and bike bump track. Lou reported that also a group that wants a skating rink in town and has much money for this has put a bid in for that site as well as two other sites.

There was discussion about affordable housing possibilities there that have been confirmed in the past by Harborlight.

Teri noted that there are currently 4 homeless people in Marblehead and a huge lack of resources here, just to emphasize the importance of affordable housing.

Next steps: develop a strategy after consulting with Becky and getting clarity from the HPP Implementation Committee on our interface with them.

Meeting adjourned.