

Fair Housing Committee Minutes
March 17, 2022

Present: Debra Larkin, Dirk Isbrandtsen, Teri McDonough, Frank Evans, Joe Whipple, Mimi Hollister, Katie Farrell

Guests: Bonnie Grenier, Lou Meyi, Christi Staples

Minutes of January 20 meeting approved.

Communications:

Discussion of town virtual presentation of March 3, "Marblehead Speaks Out for Affordable Housing – A Historical Perspective to Guide Our Future." Comments: Well received. Good history of red-lining and how we came to have the current mainly white demographic of Marblehead.

Introduction of Christi Staples, newly appointed Trustee of the Affordable Housing Trust Board. She is a social worker and Vice President of Community Impact in the Boston office of United Way Massachusetts.

Discussion with Lou Meyi about the hiring of a new Town Administrator (see below in New Business).

Unfinished Business

HPP Implementation Committee has not met. Teri talked with Becky Cutting about who can call a meeting. This issue will be discussed in the HPP Committee.

Affordable Housing Trust Board has not yet met. Their membership consists of the 5 Selectmen, Dirk Isbrandtsen, Curt James, Teri McDonough and Christi Staples. Teri will ask Kyle about an open seat and the terms of office to get clarity at Dirk's request, since his term is up in June.

No update on Bob Neuss filling the open seat on Fair Housing. There is apparently another candidate who has submitted a letter to be considered.

One more report from other communities and how they fund their Affordable Housing Trusts has been submitted from Frank Evans. Dirk suggested that this was a good, concise model and all reports should boil down to 3 questions: Do you have a Trust Fund? How is it funded? How is it used now? Our goal is to find additional sources of funding for our Trust Fund.

Debbie will go over the list of town assignments to remind us who is researching what towns.

It was agreed that a grid might be helpful to Dirk. Debby and Teri will work on that.

New Business

Lou Meyi brought up two issues. First, he noted that the recent Selectmen's meeting began with a report from the Collins Center consultants about what the town is looking for in a new Town Administrator. In the list of "ideal traits", there was nothing about affordable housing or social justice or

climate issues in the descriptors. The 5-person screening committee will include Moses Grader and Erin Noonan from the Selectmen; Tony Sasso, Becky Cutting, and John McGinn. Lou was alerting us to stay on top of this going forward.

Second, he suggested that we draft a letter to the School Committee that when they consider the possible uses of school property, affordable housing needs to be front and center, particularly the Coffin School and the Green St. property across from the Community Store, since these were highlighted by the HPP Production Plan as the most likely places in town for affordable housing development. The letter should include a request for a reply and should be copied to the Selectmen. Further, if these properties are considered for alternative uses, such as the existing town warrant Article 33 about a bike park for the Green St. property, this should be for temporary usage only with no permanent structure built on it.

There was considerable discussion about strategy at Town Meeting: Don't disallow a bike park, just ask that it be temporary because of affordable housing need; recruit people to speak on the issue at town meeting; go on record that this is key property for affordable housing; talk with Rick Smyers who submitted Warrant Article 33 to hopefully get his cooperation.

Moved and seconded and passed authorizing the co-chairs to write a letter to the School Department, copying Moses Grader, Selectman, about Town Warrant Article 33. Lou Meyi's well-written draft will be reviewed and edited for this purpose.

Dirk asked that a discussion of the Open Meeting Law be on the agenda for the next Fair Housing meeting. In the interest of getting things done in between meetings, he suggested that perhaps there can be an "Executive Committee" to work on issues without violating the Open Meeting Law. Dirk will submit this request to Town Counsel to see if it would be workable.

Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully submitted by Mimi Hollister, Scribe