

Fair Housing Committee Minutes, April 25, 2022

Mimi Hollister, Scribe

Present: Debby Larkin, Chair; Mimi Hollister, Scribe; Bob Neuss, Frank Evans, Teri McDonough, Katie Farrell, Joe Whipple

Minutes of March 17, 2022 meeting approved.

Communications:

Newly appointed member, Bob Neuss, was welcomed.

Meeting times going forward: asked to change from Thursdays going forward through the summer by Council on Aging. May meeting is Monday, May 16. June meeting is now June 27th because June 20th is a holiday, Juneteenth. We will not meet in July and August unless needed.

Noted upcoming CHAPA meetings: May 3 is a Policy Forum with a more macro focus on national policies. May 28th at 1:30 is a more locally focused forum and all are encouraged to attend.

Discussion of Town Planner, Becky Cutting's request for help with learning how other towns have considered ADU's (Accessory Dwelling Units). Mimi reported that in googling ADU's, a number of sites come up with similar reports: Most towns that have an ADU ordinance or by-law have put many restrictions in place, mainly that an ADU can only be rented to family members, as well as lot size requirements. Most towns have resisted allowing ADU's with mistaken fears that it would devalue property and would change the nature of residential communities, so much NIMBYism. Consequently, very few have ever been built in the state. 37 towns have a restricted ADU by-law and over the years an average of 2.5 per year are ever built in the whole state.

It was decided that we would nevertheless pursue the research on what our previously assigned towns have done with ADU's. (Our previous research was on who has Affordable Housing Trust Funds and how they are funded and how administered.)

Frank reported on Hingham: they have a by-law that limits the number of all dwelling units allowed in town so ADU's have much competition since the limit has been already reached. Debby will work on Swampscott and Teri on Danvers. Debby will send out the original list as a reminder.

A number of towns are considering changes to their by-laws to make ADU's more viable as an affordable housing rental resource.

In June, there will be a public hearing regarding ADU's conducted by the Planning Board. In preparation for that, the Fair Housing Committee has been asked to have a focus group on that subject which will likely happen at our May 16 meeting.

Green Street Woods bike park letter asking for our support: Katie was approached by neighbors asking for support for Warrant Article 33 at the May 2 Town Meeting . The article asks that a bike park be allowed to be built on the school property on Green St. There would be no permanent structures and it would be considered temporary until other permanent uses are determined for the property, including affordable housing. Katie suggested that we endorse the Article and speak to that effect at Town Meeting as a chance to put forth the recommended idea that affordable housing will go there when it becomes feasible. Parks and Recs will oversee the bike park and they have also agreed to the temporary nature of this arrangement. It was agreed that Dirk will be asked to speak at Town Meeting and Katie will be a back-up with wording created for her by Debby and reviewed by the Fair Housing Committee.

Unfinished Business

The Affordable Housing Trust Board is on hold until after Town Meeting.

Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee: Teri reported on three community engagement strategies that have emerged:

Housing counseling will continue to be offered at the Marblehead Counseling Center. New case manager, Lisa Blumberg, has joined and *may* be able to assist with Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) through North Shore Home Consortium.

"Housing University" training will be offered through Harborlight to community boards
Update to the Fair Housing town web page will happen once the new census figures are received.

Debby will fill in and forward to everyone the spread sheets created for our earlier research on various town Trust Funds.

New Business

Frank reported that he is negotiating a listing agreement for a 4-family property in downtown Marblehead. He has offered on behalf of this committee the opportunity to arrange a walk-through for Harborlight and several other developers of affordable housing. More to come in the next couple of weeks.

There was discussion about the new state requirements for MBTA towns, of which Marblehead is one, and the huge number of multi-family units that are “required”. There has been considerable push-back from other towns. Marblehead has submitted an action plan. There is value in the requirements in that it has pushed us to look at by-laws and focus on more affordable housing plans.

Progress on a new Town Administrator is happening. The committee will be meeting tomorrow to define skills we are looking for.

Meeting adjourned.