

Fair Housing Committee & Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee

Joint-Meeting Minutes for 06/27/2023

Debby Larkin, Vice Chair – FHC, Scribe

Members present in person:

FHC: Thatcher Kezer, Becky Curran Cutting, Erin Noonan, Debra Larkin, Dirk Isbrandtsen, Kurt James,

Deacon Joe Whipple

HPPIC: Thatcher Kezer, Erin Noonan, Kurt James, Dirk Isbrandtsen, Barton Hyte, Lou Meyi

Members present on Zoom:

HPPIC: Cathy Hoog,

Others Present in person: State Representative, Jennifer Armini, Terry Jerome – Jersey St., Will Dowd, Managing Editor, Marblehead Current

Others Present on Zoom: Eva de Charleroy, Legislative Director, Senator Crighton's Office
Jeanne Lambkin - Resident

Erin Noonan called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

Update and Discussion of Affordable Housing Priorities and Goals:

Review by Erin Noonan of FHC / HPPIC Accomplishments:

Erin reviewed some accomplishments by the FHC including the Housing Production Plan, the HPP Implementation Committee formed, the MAPC Study, etc.

Erin also reviewed some key findings after needs assessment, including the fact that Marblehead has very little inventory compared to other communities due to the following:

- Mostly single-family homes,
- very little open land,
- sea level issues,
- Multi-family allowed on 4% of owned land through special permits.

Erin also advised that the “Housing Trust Fund” has approximately \$119,000 with an additional \$10,000 expected. She then mentioned some of the projects currently taking place at Sailmaker Place, a Ted Moore project (12 A/H Units at 80% AMI, Glover 11 out of 44 are affordable housing units at 80% AMI, Smart Growth Overlay Districts (SGOD) such as Village Plaza, Miller’s Plaza and Broughton Road were also discussed as strong possibilities.

Becky Cutting, Town Planner stated that the Town received a grant from Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and is working with a consultant, Bohler Engineering, to determine where new opportunities could go, exploring several districts including one that allows multi-family by special permit only.

She explained that this could not be done as “matter of right” as it’s not that simple and areas like the Transfer Station, where it is municipal and not going to be developed, could not be used. They are doing the analysis and creating a by-law without anything designated. As an effort to make it particular to Marblehead, discussions are taking place and it seems like a decent start, stated Becky.

Further, she feels that once the analysis is complete, what the Town needs, as Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) indicated, is to make another \$15K or \$20K available and ask for ideas. Once the analysis is done, involve the Planning Board, these two Committees, workshops, get input, public interest, education, board meetings, etc. Having a consultant assisting would be helpful. A warrant article by January must be issued for the May 2024 Town Meeting.

State Representative, Jennifer Armini suggested contacting the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Becky agreed. Rep. Armini also offered her assistance in reaching out to other resources.

Erin reminded all that a discussion took place at the last meeting regarding reviewing plans for Smart Growth Overlay Districts (SGOD) areas, reviving that idea and reaching out to developers.

Marblehead Housing Authority (MHA) Executive Director, Cathy Hoog spoke about DHCD and their new name. Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and possibilities regarding three properties at MHA. She has determined that Broughton Road is worth exploring further and that the MHA Board is very much in support of that. MHA recently submitted an application to MHP for feasibility funding in order to explore possibilities on a more technical level. A site visit by EOHLC is being planned to review possibilities.

Kurt inquired about permits, 40R or 40B, should MHA expand Broughton Road. Becky explained that it could be done through the Town’s by-law, and they have special zoning which came as a surprise to many. Kurt exclaimed that it could fast track by a year or two.

Later in the meeting, Kurt and Becky discussed finding a provision in the code and Becky stated that basically it must be government use and owned. Also, there is a parking regulation that parking must be 1/6 of what is required. We require 2 per unit, so minimal parking. If a private developer is involved, they would have to go through the process.

Erin spoke of recent announcements from the Governor’s office, an email from Kim Driscoll, then opened for discussion.

Update/Discussion of State House Policy, Funding Initiatives from State Rep. Jennifer Armini:

State Representative, Jennifer Armini advised that Governor Healey announced she's using the Capital Investment Plan to spend \$1.5 billion dollars on housing and \$97 million of that will go to a new program called "Housing Works", which she stated, may be something the Town can tap into. It's for developing, preserving, and rehabilitating housing across the state. She added that it could be 200 – 300 units per year.

Regarding Village and Miller's Plaza, "Housing Works" was discussed although the regulations haven't been promulgated yet, there is potential opportunity.

They are placing \$43 million dollars into the "Affordable Housing Trust Fund", \$120 million for public housing rehabilitation, climate resiliency and re-development. All funds are over the course of five years. This would be in addition to annual HA subsidies, the House put in \$102 million for public housing subsidies and the governor \$92 million (in negotiation).

Also mentioned was the amount of \$14.9 million to "Housing Innovations Fund" to create rental housing for seniors, veterans, homeless population, and transitional units for recovery. The Governor also created the "Massachusetts Climate Bank". In that bank, there will be money for making affordable and low-income housing climate resilient.

The budget dealt with homelessness and extremely vulnerable populations, but the Tax Package increased the rental tax deduction from \$3,000 to \$4,000. Representative Armini added that most calls received in their office are about housing and usually seniors who are not making rental payments or desperate to get off the waiting list.

The budget increased the "RAFT Program" (rental assistance) to \$181 million from last year's \$41 million.

"Voucher Program" increased to \$173 million from last year's \$131 million. She stated that trend lines are good but it's because there is a crisis and the Governor's new "Capital Investment Program" is relevant and potentially good for us.

There is a "Planning Grant" program to help commercial area transit housing program which is a state program for municipalities and developers for housing built in neighborhood commercial areas in proximity to public transit, possibly useful in Village and Miller's Plazas.

Erin asked if allocations to Marblehead would be affected since we are not a transit community and Rep. Armini stated that we are a transit *abutting* community. The overlay does impact us. The bus line stopping at Village Plaza is a perfect example, but we must show great interest and get started very soon.

Kurt asked if there is any update from the School Committee regarding the Coffin School. Barton Hyte stated that they are holding off until the new school committee is in place, etc. Erin suggested scheduling for late fall so we are prepared. Barton stated that the goal is to lead up to “Town Meeting” with a general plan of its use, to support the cause.

Becky reviewed what occurred with the Gerry School – Attend Town Meeting with transfer disposition, authorization, and a very specific idea for what it would be sold for, then issue the RFP. Kurt agreed. Becky suggested we issue “Request for Information” (RFI) before the “Request for Proposals” (RFP) is issued to developers to avoid any future confusion with the Coffin School planning.

Dirk Isbrandtsen asked about our status on that timeline regarding the school. Both Erin and Becky stated that we must have official word that the School Committee no longer needs it. Dirk asked how we encourage the School Committee to decide. Erin stated that Dr. John Buckey, Superintendent of Schools, is a member of the HPPIC, has attended at least three meetings and feels it would be timely to discuss this at their “Annual Retreat” over the summer.

Thatcher stated that there have been discussions but elections and board members getting settled for their new session must take place first. He further hypothesized that given the size of the property, is it eligible for the school building assistance program? His opinion is that it is not eligible due to the space and size. If not, it would not be eligible for future education purposes. Rep. Armini stated that the alternative is that they keep it for some future educational purposes and possibly getting funding from Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), although feels there is no money in MSBA.

Dirk stated that it is a marketing challenge and requires thoughts on how to make it desirable to the community. He asked, “how do we make people want this to become an affordable housing, mixed use development as an option?”

Eva de Charleroy, Senator Crighton’s office stated that State Rep. Armini covered all very well and Eva will convey all her notated information to Senator Crighton.

Lou Meyi recalled that he’d seen some creative bills to be passed with different intent about property tax relief for elderly when the “Planning Board” conducted the ADU study. He stated it was with ADU relief tax for elderly people over 65. He asked if there are other creative items that exist. Barton stated that regarding tax relief, it would shift the burden to others and not affect the revenue.

Rep. Armini stated that what is popular is called the “Senior Circuit Breaker” which for any senior whose tax bill and water and sewer bill combined, exceed 10% of their income, they receive a tax credit. The amount is currently \$1,200 per year. The Senate may boost it to the amount to \$2,400 per year. Erin suggested FHC promote it on the website.

Becky stated there is a cap on what one can charge for rent. There is no looking at who can rent. Possibly through the A/H Trust Fund or some other fund, have some money. A scenario, if one creates an ADU and you obtain a match, one must charge an established percentage of rent for a long period of time. She also verified that Salem went to the State Legislature to get a real estate tax extension.

At Kurt's suggestion, Becky will provide a copy of what Salem has for real estate tax and subsidy so that we can review to determine if that is something we can consider. Rep. Armini stated it would be voted on at Town meeting and then forwarded to both she and Senator Crighton.

A brief discussion took place regarding federal funding, monies through the inflation reduction act, the climate bill, and preparedness to have the ability to utilize it or it will go to another community. Lou emphasized the importance of showing Marblehead's willingness to affect the housing crisis. Erin mentioned preparing for putting something forward for SGOD, MBTA Community Plan, potentially surplus for school property and Cathy's project at Broughton Road.

Rep. Armini urged all to reach out to her for any questions, outreach or letters of support and any other help needed and reiterated that she is here to help as is Eva. She also stated that there is no greater partner than Senator Crighton. She also expressed gratitude to Thatcher stating he knows and understands the process on Beacon Hill and that he has completely realistic expectations.

Thatcher mentioned that approximately five thousand bills get filed, and only hundreds passed. The key to success is the relationship with local legislators and giving them as much particular information to fight the fight for us. He stated, "It's that relationship that is critical".

Debby Larkin mentioned that she brought FHC web-site materials as requested at the prior FHC meeting which will be tabled until the next meeting.

At the request of Erin Noonan, Kurt James moved that at the next meeting, we take public comment before the meeting in the interest of time. Deacon Joe Whipple seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

NEXT MEETING DATE: To be determined.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Terry Jerome, Jersey Street reminded all that "residents solely on Social Security do not file taxes and the tax break is not helping the most financially vulnerable".

Will Dowd, Marblehead Current stated that he verified the Senate has passed the \$2,400 relating to the previously mentioned tax break. He then asked how one factors in the deficit.

Thatcher stated "there is a balanced budget, looking forward we need to focus on more efforts in development to generate more new growth, determine how to reconfigure roles, like Becky's

(who is leaving) to create a structure that is focused on economic development opportunities, new growth, and growing our new growth revenue. Looking at Fiscal 2025 budget, creating those functions so over and above the planning function component of economic development function, as well. They go hand in hand and Becky's been doing it all.

Kurt added that if Becky can figure out a way to make this a smart growth district on top of the MBTA, then every unit receives a subsidy, so the state pays the town.

Jeanne Lambkin, Devereux St. thanked the Committees for making the meeting accessible. She supports all and thanked Erin for her leadership.

ADJOURNMENT: Kurt James made a motion to Adjourn, Barton Hyte seconded, and all were in favor.