

**Fair Housing Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2023**

Members present in person:

Thatcher Kezer, Becky Curran Cutting, Debra Larkin, Dirk Isbrandtsen, Deacon Joe Whipple, Mimi Hollister

Members present on Zoom: None

Others Present in Person: Kurt James, Fair Housing Committee – Alternate Member and HPPIC Member
Andrew DeFranza, Executive Director, Harborlight Community Partners

Others Present on Zoom: Kyle Wiley

1. **Thatcher Kezer, Town Administrator called the meeting to order** at 3:35 PM and confirmed that a quorum of members was in attendance. The order of the meeting agenda was revised to accommodate the arrival of the guest speaker, Andrew DeFranza.
2. **Follow up on Planning Board Presentations regarding MBTA Zoning Requirements by Rebecca Curran Cutting, Town Planner** took place. (Some FHC members are also members of the Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee (HPPIC)).

A discussion regarding two recent public “Planning Board Meetings” that many members of FHC attended occurred. Ms. Cutting stated that those meetings were to give information and gain input into the MBTA zoning requirements. The present stage is reaching out to stakeholders and organizing focus groups (including FHC & HPPIC) with specific questions. Ms. Cutting further stated that focus group meetings are taking place with developers, architects/engineers that work in the town, department heads and utilities and other groups including the Select Board, anyone who is interested including renters, students, etc. The Town is reaching out for ideas. Tax increases were also discussed. Lily Linke from CHAPA is helping determine information. Discussion of several questions began to gain input from FHC.

The question “**What types of housing issues have you observed in Marblehead?**” was presented. Input included that it’s expensive housing, that single family units have a lack of components for affordable housing, the public housing *centralized* waitlist making longer wait times for local applicants, high median cost requiring high income becomes unaffordable, historic housing stock has limitations and accessibility issues.

Also asked, “**How will MBTA 3A compliance benefit/impact Marblehead?**” Multi-family housing and traffic issues (pros & cons) were discussed. More affordable housing could be created. The vehicle for creating affordable housing has been 40B housing for several years in non-public housing, which fosters a sense of community; yet the senior population could find it “isolating” as families move on, etc. An increase in children was mentioned as a possible concern of some. Ms. Cutting will quantify the number of children in multi-family situations.

Guided principals being established to help guide decision making around compliance and with MBTA zoning was discussed. Scattered sites, affordability, six unit minimum and percentages are being researched regarding what other communities are doing. As stated by Thatcher Kezer, “the context would be a minimum of 27 acres with a minimum of 15 units/acre for parameters but need minimum of 897 units – many variables involved.

Several parcels and both tailored and uniform density were compared and discussed. Adaptive reuse office buildings with tailored density rather than uniform density and certain zones could be tailored by different density levels. Kurt James mentioned expanding 40R, ADUs and non-intrusive housing and our goal to maximize affordability. Joe Whipple mentioned the importance of educating Marblehead and principal zones being convenient to MBTA traffic.

Zoning Locations were discussed. Ms. Cutting reminded all that heartland and conservation land may not be used, and that the most popular housing seems to be cottage style, courtyard, duplex, side by side, live/work, side stacked. She also stated that no district can be less than 5 acres. **Potential Locations** were also discussed by all.

3. **Andrew DeFranza, Executive Director, Harborlight Community Partners (HCP)** spoke and at Dirk Isbrandtsen’s request, described his depth of experience and knowledge in dealing with many communities, what it takes to develop affordable housing and where successes have occurred. Thatcher Kezer requested that he describe his footprint in Marblehead.

Mr. DeFranza stated that there are four items in HCP’s process to create affordable housing. They Develop, Manage, and Provide Services for populations that are vulnerable in other ways than economics including seniors, individuals, and adults with developmental delays, etc. They also provide Advocacy and Public Education by talking with different municipalities, the State House, various constituency, and stake holder groups to determine how it works, what they might want to do and how they will do it in accordance with their particular community. HCP’s footprint is the North Shore, Lynn to Rockport, west to Middleton, 20-22 communities and active in about twelve.

In Marblehead, HCP has a relationship with “Marblehead Community Housing Coalition”. Harborlight is a member of that group which functions as a subsidiary of Harborlight, the Sewell School on Elm Street was created for housing. There were some first-time home buyer units on the list who now run their own units. (Owner operated) HCP has looked at many areas in Marblehead including schools, empty lots, etc.

HCP, as explained by Mr. DeFranza, has been a long-running, non-profit, community development corporation for about sixty years. Kurt James is the VP & handles legal work. Over the years, HCP has become friendly with many Marblehead folks with whom they have worked over the years.

Mechanics / Process - How are we identifying sites and what happens? HCP will funnel big calls, such as requests and suggestions – often from municipal groups, housing trusts, CPC, concerned citizens, etc. The flow is extensive, and they sift through inquiries. They have a handle on what models work and use them as guidelines for future projects to gain an understanding regarding what may include a viable approach. Favorable items may be a project with a community group attached to it, something that is interesting about the site, historical features, special population, available funding, donated land – some sort of item that will motivate HCP to give a closer look.

A diagram of assessment including three variables to determine if forward motion is possible would include the following: 1. **What is politically viable?** Looking at what can be permitted, considering neighbors, constituency groups, town officials, town employees, looking at zoning, etc. 2. **What is physically viable?** Considering reasonable parameters, size, the existence of wetland lines or a ledge, odd shape, and what would reasonably fit. 3. **What is Financially viable?** Several successful HCP models exist and are used to determine different opportunities. All three must be examined.

Cost and time could increase if surveys, wetlands engineers, civil and environmental engineers, contractors, architects, are required. The cost could range from \$30,000 - \$50,000 to test the site. The Permitting phase may take 6-12 months. Money sources: (usually 10 or 12 sources) local, regional, state, etc. This process could take a couple years or more.

Mr. DeFranza stressed the importance of HCP's ongoing efforts to build neighbor support, satisfy community issues and strive to be a solution maker. The importance of being physically present, listening, paying attention to concerns, and responding either way has worked toward successful outcomes. Trades with neighbors have occurred to reach various agreements. The effort to humanize the experience creating lunches or meetings was also discussed.

MBTA was again briefly discussed, and the MA Community Investment Tax Credit was explained in detail by Mr. DeFranza, as was the possibility of "Marblehead Community Housing Coalition" possibly applying to become a community development agency, become independent and make a plan on fund use such as first-time home buyer deposits, repairs, etc.

4. **NEXT MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 3:30 PM

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

6. **ADJOURNMENT:** A motion to Adjourn, was made and seconded with all in favor at 4:52 PM

Debby Larkin, Vice Chair