

Newton Housing Partnership Meeting
Notes from December 15, 2020 Meeting
Conference Call Meeting
5:00-7:00 pm

Partnership Members in Attendance: Mark Caggiano, Eliza Datta, Chuck Eisenberg, John Hennessey, Lizbeth Heyer, Kthi Marchi, Josephine McNeil, Marva Serotkin, Stephen Tise

Others in Attendance: Amanda Berman, Barney Heath, Eamon Bencivengo, members of the community and City Council

Summary of the meeting of November 24th was approved.

Coleman House Renovation Project Funding Request

Marva Serotkin chaired during this portion of the meeting.

The presentation was conducted by Elise Selinger, project director for 2LifeCommunities and the director of Coleman House. Elise Selinger explained that a proposal has been submitted by 2LifeCommunities on behalf of Coleman House for funding a major preservation and renovation project. Funding from the City represents 18% of the total cost of the project. Coleman House serves a very income population with an annual income of \$12,000. The project addresses ventilation, compliance and accessibility issues. The waiting list is 550 individuals. Construction is projected at 20 months. 2LifeCommunities is seeking endorsement from the Partnership.

Partnership members requested information as follows:

- How much CPA funding has been appropriated for family and senior housing for the past 5 years
- What is the ethnicity breakdown at Coleman
- What is the relationship to the Opus project
- What is the pipeline for projects funded by CDBG and HOME
- Does the project meet Fair Housing Design requirements

The Partnership agreed to hold a special meeting on January 5th to receive answers to the above questions.

Affordable Housing Trusts

A presentation about different models for housing trusts was made by staff. This item has been docketed by the City Council and will be a continuing discussion item. Eliza Datta and Chuck Eisenberg spoke about their experience working with local housing trusts. In Cambridge, the trust receives CPA and inclusionary funds with allocation made by the CPC and City Council. A trust expedites decision making and responsiveness to community needs and provides for additional funds for affordable housing through fundraising and new sources such as a real estate transfer tax. The Partnership members agreed to take a position of this item in the next few months.

Josephine McNeil provided an historical perspective citing that a trust has been discussed for many years and that the City's legislative body has not wanted to relinquish funding decisions.

Newton Housing Partnership Initiatives

- Update from the Subcommittee on extremely low income housing strategy. The Subcommittee (Josephine McNeil, Mark Caggiano, Marva Serotkin, Kathi Marchi) and the Partnership agreed that new projects include few ELI units and that the need for ELI units is a high priority for the Partnership and must be confronted. The City does not have an inventory of the number of ELI units and that an inventory is a first step. In addition, there is a need for self sufficiency programs for many of these individuals. The Subcommittee will return with a proposal for a pilot program.
- Update from the Subcommittee on Zoning Redesign. The Subcommittee (Chuck Eisenberg, Lizbeth Heyer and Eliza Datta) and City Councilor Bowman reported that the next phase of this project is village centers and an overlay strategy. Zoning Redesign is an ongoing project.

Eviction Protection

_____ Lynn Weissburg and Josephine McNeil reported that to date 5 notices for eviction have been filed in the Newton District Court and that there is need to get to these individuals as well as others at risk information about transferring these cases to housing court. It was voted to send a letter to the Mayor requesting that the City send a letter to tenants about the role of the housing court.

Upcoming Meetings

NHP meetings will be held the 3rd Tuesday of every month 6-8pm. The January 19th meeting will start at 6pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marva Serotkin