

Newton Housing Partnership Meeting  
Notes from May 19, 2020 Meeting  
Conference Call Meeting  
6:00-8:00 pm

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

Others in Attendance: Amanda Berman, Barney Heath, Eamon Bencivengo, Dana Hanson, members of the community

Approval of April 21, 2020 Meeting Summary

Josephine McNeil clarified the section of the notes that addressed the CARES ACT Funds. The section was revised as follows:

Staff stated that \$1.1 has been allocated to CDBG and \$587,000 has been allocated to ESG funds distributed among four communities. The goal is to provide Newton residents who need three months of rental assistance due to COVID who are living in rental housing and owners of deed restricted units. Josephine McNeil recommended using the funds for more urgent needs rather than rental assistance. Staff responded to this recommendation by stating that the funds needed to be spent quickly.

It was moved by John Hennessey and seconded by Steve Tise to approve the notes as revised.

Project Updates

Barney Heath provided the following project updates:

- Armory. The City has received two proposals for the feasibility study. The proposals will be reviewed and a decision made in the near future. A request has been made to the City Council to extend the JAPG until November in order to cover the work of the consultants.
- Zoning Redesign. The current focus is with the ZAP Committee. The approach for review is using the case study model and evaluating how different constituents would be impacted by each model. The first group for consideration is residential. Staff are meeting with interest groups such as architects. Barney Heath projected a summer

presentation to NHP and a full Council vote in fall 2021. Stephen Tise will replace Josephine McNeil on the NHP subcommittee to review the zoning redesign.

- Riverside. A special permit hearing is scheduled for May 26<sup>th</sup> focused on design using the Northland template. June 2<sup>nd</sup> is hearing on transportation.
- Dunstan East. A hearing before the ZBA is scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup>. Changes include adding 8 units at 50% AMI and site plan. Conditions of the Board order is scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>. Discussion of the membership included need for services for very low income residents.
- Riverdale. The next hearing is scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Mitigation package is not final. The developers have offered three units at 50%.

### Newton COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program

The City Council approved a \$2.5m housing relief fund for three months of rental assistance not to exceed 70% of household monthly rent with proof that income has decreased due to COVID. The fund will be administered by Metro West. There will be a lottery application. The cap is \$2500 per household for three months rent that can be used retroactively. The goal of the fund is immediate relief not housing stabilization. If available, federal funds will be used in place of Community Preservation Funds.

### Newton Housing Partnership Project Review Criteria

A draft of project review criteria had been distributed to the NHP prior to the meeting. Marva Serotkin explained that the criteria were based on those promulgated by the Newton Fair Housing Commission and prior discussion with the NHP. Members raised several questions about the process for project review and how that review reflects or not the issues of concern by the NHP.

- Is there benefit for group review of projects bringing together various committees and commission (urban design, fair housing, NHP)? There is a model on the staff side during the review process. Would this group undertaking result in future barriers for developers or streamline the process?
- Amanda Berman responded that zoning redesign offers an opportunity to shape broader policy that includes these committees and commissions.

- Eliza Datta questioned how to add value and predictability to the review process for developers. There was agreement that NHP should be involved early in the review process.
- Priorities that were articulated by members include 50% units, services for low income families and individuals, definition of diversity and creating opportunity to live successfully in Newton.
- Marva Serotkin and Eliza Datta would revise the criteria and return to the NHP.

Members requested data about the need for affordable housing in Newton. Amanda Berman volunteered to redistribute the 2016 Housing Strategy Report for review by the NHP.

### Upcoming Meetings

NHP meetings will be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month 6-8pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Marva Serotkin