



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath  
Director of  
Planning & Development

Malcolm Lucas  
Housing Planner

*Members*

Ted Hess Mahan, Chair  
Kathy Laufer, Vice-Chair  
Esther Schlorholtz  
Josephine McNeil  
Donna Rigg  
Tatjana Meschede  
Rosemary Larking  
Judy Korzenowski  
Alexandra Weiffenbach  
Ellen Tanowitz

1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459  
T 617/796-1120  
F 617/796-1142

[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)

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## CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Fair Housing Committee

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## MEETING AGENDA

Date: February 3, 2021

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Place: Virtual (Zoom)

**Members Present:** Theodore M. Hess Mahan, Chair  
Kathy Laufer, Vice Chair  
Josephine McNeil  
Esther Schlorholtz  
Tatjana Meschede  
Judy Korzenowski  
Donna Rigg  
Ellen Tanowitz

**Members Absent:** Alexandra Weiffenbach  
Rosemary Larking

**Staff Present:** Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner  
Barney Heath, Planning and Development Director  
Jini Fairley, ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator  
Eamon Bencivengo  
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community  
Development

**Public Present:** Councilor Pamela Wright  
Councilor Alicia Bowman  
Councilor Julia Malakie  
Hannah Cross, Newton Housing Authority

Malcolm Lucas, Housing Planner served as recorder, Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

### 1. Approval of November 2020, December 2020, and January 2021 meeting minutes

- THM asked the Committee if there were any additional information that needed to be added to the November minutes and did a roll call and all agreed and were in favor to approve November 2020 minutes. THM motioned to approve the minutes ES and ET seconded THM asked if the Committee had any additional information that needed to be added to the December 2020 minutes. THM asked the Committee and did a roll call. All agreed and were in favor. THM stated that he saw the email for the January 2021 minutes went out, but he did not get a chance to make edits and asked of anyone needed to make any comments or edits. JM asked that the Committee to table the minutes until March because her computer was down for a few days and she has edits that she needs to make. THM motioned to table the minutes until March and KL seconded.

## **2. FY22 Annual Action Plan Presentation – Eamon Bencivengo**

- EB discussed the timeline of the Annual Action Plan process and stated that the AAP outlines how to government will spend the federal fund Newton receives and explained each category of each source of funds Newton receives. CDBG, HOME, and ESG. EB explained the process about the 5-year consolidated plan and stated that every year we go through a public process to talk about the AAP and CAPER. EB stated that he will focus on the affordable housing and fair housing section in this presentation. EB stated that this year's allocation stated that we anticipate around 1.5 million.
- CDBG is the largest bucket of funding and is allocated to mostly affordable housing and some architectural access programs. HOME focuses on the creation of affordable housing and rehab and new construction. ESG focuses on Human Services. The five goals that are listed in the AAP is Affordable Housing, Fair Housing, Human Services, Supportive Services for Homeless and At-Risk Homelessness, and Architectural Access. EB broke down the estimated allocation for the FY22 funds for CDBG- \$1,931,323, HOME- \$1,480,032 and ESG - \$167,734. HOME's allocation is for the whole Consortium and Newton specific HOME dollar allocation is around \$130,000
- FY22 Affordable Housing goals are Production of Affordable units (Rental and Homeowner), Preservation of Affordable Units, Rehabilitation of Affordable Units and Supporting Affordable Homeownership.
- FY22 funds will be going to the Coleman House - Comprehensive Rehab and Preservation also the West Newton Amory. THM stated that this past Monday the City Council approved the purchase of the Amory.
- EB discussed Fair housing and explained that the City is in process working with a consultant on the Analysis of impediment for implementation. Eamon also stated that the City will be collaborating with the Consortium. Year one strategies are working on getting a training for municipal staff, boards and commissions. For Fair housing month having an event/conference or a panel of experts. And providing information and training to landlords, property owners and housing developers. Lastly focusing on testing.
- KL wanted clarification about the FY19/20/21 funds under the rehab that are going to be used to rehab the CANDO Property. KL asked does this mean that there were no appropriate projects for fiscal year 19 and 20 for these funds. ML gave a breakdown of how often they receive application and a average of how many applications are received. ML stated about 4 a year and that here receive various inquiries but people back out because homeowners or their children does not want a lien on their home. KL stated that she would like to clarify and asked if there were left over funds for whatever

reason. AB stated that the City budgets around \$800,000 for our housing budget and about \$100,000 is set aside for housing rehab. KL stated since there is such a demand for housing, she was just trying to understand why is funding left over. AB stated its timing could be the factor. AB stated it could be what is in the pipeline and when a developer asks for local funds. AB stated that sometimes we could sit on a lump sum of funds and sometimes we could have a zero balance. KL is thrilled to incorporation of the recommendations under fair housing from our consultants. KL thinks that it is incredibly important to set aside money of trainings and testing. JM asked is there any plans this year to get the input from renters who are benefiting from these programs. EB stated that he thinks so and that in the AI this year is focusing on the properly outreaching. BH stated that we have a database with a list of low-income residents who are benefiting from the rent assistance program. BH stated that we can reach out to them and JM stated that that was a great idea and thanked BH. JM stated in the last couple of years there has not been any new family units or in the pipeline to use CDBG or HOME funding and asked if her analysis was correct. AB mentioned Auburn street was a project that used these funds (3 family unit) and stated that Armory is a potential project. JM stated that the Amory is five years out. JM stated that she is just making a point to say there is an issue with the funding that is meant for low-income families through CDBG and HOME funds in Newton. JM stated that her concern is that we are not using these funds to create affordable housing for low-income individuals in families in Newton, but they are in other communities within the Consortium. JM stated that Newton no longer has an operating CHDO and that the FHC needs be concerned and to have a conversation. JM asked is there anyone in the consultant staff in the organization the City is using that deals with equity and inclusion. JM also would also like to talk about getting the Committee to be trained in equity and inclusion.

- Lee Mondshein the testing asked could involve short term testing. BH stated that he did not know. EB thanked him for his JM the Human Rights Commission no longer follows up with complaints because they do not have the capacity. THN stated that he would follow up with the HRC

### **3. 306 Walnut Street Presentation (Buchbinder & Schlesinger)**

- Steve Buchbinder introduced John Pears, architect and Jeff Cohen, Principal stated that this is not a professional developer. And gave a background on Jeff Cohen. He stated that this development is unique. Jeff and his wife received a building to renovate to create affordable housing in Newtonville. Former site to CVS.
- Austin Street and Trio is in the same vicinity. The project is close to public transportation, food service, retail and employment. The developer is looking to rezone property to a mixed use. 4. 5 story building with 3500 square feet. Unit break down 2 studios, 15 1 bedroom and 10 2 bedrooms.
- John Pears, architect. Talked about Newtonville and gave some specs of the building. There will be retail under the units. He stated that the building will be fully accessible, and parking will be in the rear and under the building. 5 out of 27 units will be affordable.
- THM thanked them for the presentation. JM is concerned that there are no 3-bedroom units and think that at least one of the units should be 3-bedrooms. JM stated that she was please that development will be in Newtonville and stated that it has been talked about it for years. S Buchbinder wanted to talk about the 3-bedroom issue and stated that they will ask the developer. Jeffery Cohen stated that this may take an affordable

unit away. JM stated that the 3-bedroom would be preferable and to make the 3-bedroom

- S. Buchbinder and the developer ranked themselves using the FHC tool. Affordability – 0, Accessibility – 0, Visitability – 3, Proximity to Employment – 3, Proximity to Transportation – 2 and Discretionary Impact – 3. They gave themselves a total of **11 points**. The lawyers stated that he would like to get this project in front of the City Council in May 2021. He stated that he knows there will be some discussion about the parking because it is not much of it. 27 Units and 9 spaces.
- ET asked did they indicated the breakdown of the five affordable units. S. Buchbinder stated that it may be a 1-3-1 breakdown 1 studio, 3 - 1 bedroom and 1 – 2 bedrooms. They did not have the information available. Councilor Bowman wants to support JM's call to make sure they are making units family friendly because it is walking distance to three schools. Thinks this is a very ideal place for families and people with disabilities.
- JM stated that if the permitting passes on this project could they come back to talk about their lottery. They stated that they could. THM added that he was very impressed, and it is an ideal location. THM thank them for coming in and talking to the FHC. 1114 Beacon Street is an upcoming development and would like to come in March.

#### 4. 2 Life Presentation Discussion

- THM asked if they were any comments or concerns on the Colman House and the OPUS project. KL stated that she is torn, she wants to see Colman House upgraded but she worries that Coleman House' access may be limited and has concerns for affordability when integrating both programs .There will be two groups of individuals from socioeconomic backgrounds.. JM stated that she mentioned this at the last meeting, and it was discussed but she is unsure of what the answer is but there are concerns. In 2 Life's discussion they discussed their population and stated that there are only two black families out of 100 plus units. JM stated that she feels 2 Life has good intentions to make things better but really can't make progress because the units are already leased. JM also stated that the likelihood of people of color to be able to afford the units at OPUS is very scarce. She thinks the FHC should be concerned about it and the City of Newton should be concerned about when they are using Federal funds even if it's not intentional, we need to be aware of disparate impact. BH stated that it is hard to respond of the population that is currently at Coleman House due to history and stated that there are people there that have very low income which is our concern and focus. BH stated there will be affordable units at Opus based on Newton's inclusionary zoning requirement. BH stated that we need to do a better job of getting the word out. And stated that this is the work that must be done. JM stated that everything that happens in this City needs an equity and inclusion lens on it. KL stated that in Benchmark the affordable units have the same "perks" as the market rate neighbors have but the meal plan in OPUS is separate that this must be revisited and thinks that the low-income tenants will have issues with this. Hanna Cross agreed with KL and JM had questions on who affordable would this place be and asked who would be able to have up front cost for this program and who will feel welcomed based on income and race.
- Donna Rigg asked about Fair housing Month and asked are they going to do anything, THM stated that he would follow up with planning to discuss putting some on in April. A. Bowman stated that she would be happy to do a resolution with the full City Council in recognition of National Fair Housing months and a she would have a short discussion item with Zoning and Planning, Land Use .A. Bowman feels that her fellow Councilman

could use some training . THM stated that in the past the FHC has had events and invited City Councilors. THM stated that he did not want to be disparaging but the get the usual councilors who come out. A. Bowman and stated that there could be some discussion around fair housing and is happy to discuss this offline with Ted. THM asked if the FHC would co-docket with A Bowman the committee agreed.

## **5. 1149-1151 Walnut Street Letter**

- THM stated that he was supposed to draft a letter and had obligations and stated that he will have it ready for next month

## **6. Other Business**

- City Council voted on the purchase of the Amory and thanked everybody. THM asked BH who will be preparing the RFP. BH stated that Affirmative was contracted to help to assist and doesn't know exactly how it will the RFP is structured. THM asked if the FHC to see a draft and could be notified about the process. BH stated that he would.
- Rent up. New survey went out to Austin Street. The FHC is trying to dig a little deeper about the lottery process and who gets into these units and why people who were in the lottery are not in the units. KL stated that she hopes that she will have a response by next meeting and stated that they will use this with other projects. JM asked planning if they could get a copy of the deed restriction for the home buyer units. ML stated that he could send the restrictions.

Meeting Adjourned @ 10:am

## **7. Next meeting Wednesday, March 3, 2021**

\*Supplementary materials are available for public review in the Planning Department of City Hall (basement) the Friday before the meeting. For more information contact **Malcolm Lucas at 617.796.1149**. The location of this meeting/event is wheelchair accessible and Reasonable Accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a Reasonable Accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance (2 weeks for ASL or CART) of the meeting/event: [jfairley@newtonma.gov](mailto:jfairley@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711