

APPROVED

Newton Housing Partnership Meeting
Notes from February 16, 2021 Meeting
Zoom Meeting
6:00-8:00 pm

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

Others in Attendance: Barney Heath, members of the community and City Council

The January 5 and January 19 meeting summaries were unanimously approved.

Affordable Housing Trusts

Barney Heath outlined the steps undertaken within City government to consider establishment of an Affordable Housing Trust (AHT). A presentation was made at the last CPC meeting regarding CPA funding. ZAP will discuss AHTs at their March 22nd meeting. Mass Housing Partnership will be present. Eventually the issue will be presented to the City Council.

It was noted that the CPC currently acts in many ways as an AHT except that it does not fund pre-development. CPC funding recommendations are considered by two City Council committees. CPA funds by law must be allocated at least 10% each to affordable housing, open spaces and historical preservation. Currently the CPC has allocated 35% to affordable housing. CPA is a significant source of funding for AHTs. Another source is IZ funds. Since Newton does not have linkage funds, developers may choose to contribute to the IZ fund instead of including affordable units. The current IZ fund is limited since most developers choose to include affordable units in accordance with the IZ Ordinance.

Questions for the NHP to consider in regard to AHTs include

- In what way does the NHP want to weigh in on the AHT discussion
- What is the best legal structure for the AHT?
- Whether the NHP should support or not an AHT

Members of the NHP, City Councilors and members of the public in attendance advanced opinions about the need for an AHT that included

- AHT is nimbler to respond to the needs for affordable housing

- There is a greater predictability of funds
- AHT can transfer public property for development

Concern was expressed by some members that a review of all City functions related to development would need to be reviewed and streamlined in order for an AHT to be efficient and effective.

Chair Lizbeth Heyer stated that the NHP should be prepared to present at the ZAP meeting on March 22nd. Josephine McNeil volunteered to present a statement reflecting the goals and principles for consideration of an AHT in Newton. NHP members were asked to send thoughts and comments to Josephine McNeil within the next two weeks.

Open Meeting Law and NHP working groups

Barney Heath brought to the attention of the NHP the opinion of the City attorney that the NHP working groups are subject to the Open Meeting Law requiring announcement of meetings and minutes. Discussion ensued regarding the interpretation of the Open Meeting Law.

Mark Caggiano moved that the NHP formally request in writing that the Mayor request the City Law Department to seek an opinion by the State Ethics Commission. The vote by the NHP was unanimous. Lizbeth Heyer will write the letter to the Mayor.

NHP Initiatives

1. ELI housing strategy. The working group (Mark Caggiano, Kathi Marchi, Josephine McNeil and Marva Serotkin) on services presented a proposal to promote economic self-sufficiency for very low and extremely low income families. The model is one developed by EMPATH that has previously worked in Newton. The pilot project proposal prioritized families moving into the recently approved developments. Since these projects will not come online for several years, it was recommended to the working group to revise the proposal to focus on families currently living in Newton. After the two year pilot, the program will be evaluated for inclusion in the Armory development as well as the new developments recently approved. Also, it was suggested that incentives for participants should be included. There was enthusiasm expressed by members. A revised proposal will be reviewed at the next meeting of the NHP and then submitted to the Planning Department.
2. Zoning Redesign. Next NHP meeting.

3. Armory. RFP in summer. Question under consideration is the mix of tenant categories.
4. COVID 19. Additional \$1.2m CPA funds have been approved to assist tenants through June 30th.
5. Riverside. Developers have submitted a request to revise their plan: decrease in the number of units and replace the hotel and offices for life science labs. The change in number of units would reduce the number of affordable units. There was opposition expressed by NHP members. This will be added to the agenda for the next NHP meeting.

NHP meetings will be held the 3rd Tuesday of every month 6-8pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marva Serotkin