

Newton Housing Partnership Meeting
Notes from April 20, 2021 Meeting
Zoom Meeting
6:00-8:00 pm

APPROVED AT 5.18.21 MEETING

Partnership Members in Attendance: Mark Caggiano, Eliza Datta, Chuck Eisenberg, Josephine McNeil, Marva Serotkin, Steve Tise

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

The March 16, 2021 meeting summary was unanimously approved. Moved by Chuck Eisenberg and seconded by Mark Caggiano.

Dunstan East Project

Mark Development (Damien Chaviano, Stephen Buchbinder) presented an update on the Dunstan East Project. The developers have acquired an adjacent property, now occupied by Phillips Glass, and is seeking approval to increase the number of units to 302 from 234 to include 76 affordable units (original 59) and 3.4% allocated for under 50% AMI. The developers worked with Josephine McNeil who stated that she was pleased with the new plan. Steve Tise asked about the connection to the adjacent property now occupied by the Armory. The developers indicated that there is no connection at this time. Steve Tise supported further discussion on this topic.

VOTE: It was moved by Chuck Eisenberg and seconded by Mark Caggiano for the Partnership to support the revised plan. The vote was unanimous.

Riverside Project

Mark Development presented an amendment to the original plan. The developers are seeking to convert the hotel to a life-sciences building, decrease the number of units to 550 from 582, reduce the size of the units and change some of the building heights. The unit mix has stayed the same. The number of Tier 1 affordable units at and below 80% AMI has stayed the same at 44 units, while the number of Tier 2 middle-income units has increased from 15 to 23. Members of the Partnership were pleased that the number of Tier 1 affordable units has stayed the same despite the decrease in the total number of units. Josephine McNeil asked about the available date for occupancy. The developers indicated that if construction starts in the fall, then occupancy will be 28-30 months from the start date.

VOTE: It was moved by Chuck Eisenberg and seconded by Mark Caggiano to support the amended plan. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Affordable Housing Trust for Newton

Eliza Datta led the discussion that focused on the draft letter circulated to the Partnership regarding an affordable housing trust for Newton. The letter was written by Lizbeth Heyer. At the previous meeting, the Partnership set out guiding principles for how a trust could work in Newton. Eliza Datta stated that an affordable housing trust has the potential to streamline the review process and that a trust will signal a commitment to affordable housing. Partnership members agreed for the need for additional information prior to taking a position on establishing an affordable housing trust for Newton: what is the power of the board, what are the sources of funding, target income levels, what is the role of the Newton Housing Authority. It was recommended that Lizbeth and Eliza revise the letter based upon the discussion.

Newton City Council Commendation Honoring the Newton Fair Housing Committee

The Partnership was requested to submit a letter to the City Council supporting the Commendation Honoring the Newton Fair Housing Committee and expressing the Partnership's disappointment with those Councilors who either voted against or stood outside the rails for the vote. The item passed the City Council. A letter drafted by Lizbeth Heyer was considered for discussion. Councilors Wright and Malakie expressed their concern about the wording and the policy. Lynn Weisberg from Engine 6 expressed her concern that Councilors do not understand the fair housing obligations of the City. Amanda Berman reminded all present that Judi Barrett will present a WestMetro HOME Consortium Fair Housing Month workshop, open to all, on April 29th. All present were encouraged to attend the meeting or listen to the recording following the meeting. It was agreed that the Partnership will reconsider this item at the next meeting.

Introduction of Hattie Kerwin Derrick

Amanda Berman introduced Hattie Kerwin Derrick who has been appointed as Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion. She told the Partnership about her background and that she expects to attend Partnership meetings.

Newton Housing Partnership Initiatives

- Extremely low income housing strategy

Barney Heath stated that the self-sufficiency concept has been presented to the Mayor and HHS Commissioner – Barney and Deb Youngblood are looking to touch base with the Mayor regarding this proposal.

- Zoning Redesign

Village Centers is the next agenda item for ZAP. Recommendation to engage renters in the discussions about the implications of zoning redesign.

- DEI

What is the role of NHP in discussion regarding amending the inclusionary preference. Josephine McNeil advocated for data from developers to better understand the lease up numbers compared to the number of applications by race. Staff will return to the Partnership at an upcoming meeting to review the written report by consultant Judi Barrett and ultimately a recommendation from Administration.

Project Updates

- West Newton Armory

Eamon Bencivengo reported that a draft RFP would be distributed shortly for comment. There will be MOAs with MHC and NHC.

- COVID 19 Emergency Housing Relief Program.

Amanda Berman reported that households are applying each month. An additional \$1.2 million was allocated for housing rental assistance through June 30, 2021.

Open Seat on NHP

John Hennessey has resigned. Please contact the Mayor's Office with recommendations to fill the seat.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Marva Serotkin