

City of Newton



Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Community Preservation Committee

APPROVED MINUTES

April 12, 2022

Barney S. Heath
Director

The virtual meeting was held online on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, beginning at 7:00 P.M. Community Preservation Committee (CPC) members present included Mark Armstrong, Dan Brody, Eliza Datta, Byron Dunker, Susan Lunin, Robert Maloney, Jennifer Molinsky, and Martin Smargiassi. Committee member Judy Weber was not present for this meeting. Community Preservation Program Manager Lara Kritzer was also present and served as recorder.

Present for the Planning Board were Peter Doeringer, Kelley Brown, Barney Heath, Kevin McCormick, Jennifer Molinsky, and Sudha Maheshwari.

Chair Dan Brody opened the Community Preservation Committee's public meeting at 7:00 P.M and introduced the CPC members present at this time. Mr. Doeringer then opened the Planning and Development Board public meeting as well.

Joint Public Hearing with the Planning and Development Board on Proposal for the West Newton Armory Housing Development

Present on behalf of the project were applicants Taylor Bearden and David Oliveri from Civico Development and Caitlin Madden and Claire Comeau from Metro West Community Development (MWCD). The Applicants began their PowerPoint presentation with an introduction to their organizations. MWCD was noted to have previously worked with the CPC on the Auburn Street affordable housing project and to be currently working on a 40 unit affordable housing development in Hudson. Civico had completed projects in Lincoln, Worcester and Reading and was excited to be partnering with MWCD on the West Newton Armory Affordable Housing Development.

The team noted that the City had been working with the State since 2018 on the purchase of the property for use as a 100% affordable housing development. The project team had submitted a proposal in response to the City's RFP in September 2021. Since their proposal was chosen by the City, they have been meeting with numerous groups for feedback and engaging with the community about the project. Their team meets weekly with City staff, including the City's ADA coordinator and others to take the project to another level. They explained that the proposal was to construct 43 units of affordable housing on the site which met universal design principles to meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities. The project was designed to include pedestrian friendly open spaces as well as private patio and lawn areas for residents. The historic head house of the existing armory building will be preserved and will have publicly accessible meeting space and history exhibits. The

website www.newtonma.gov/cpa

staff contact Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager

email lkritzer@newtonma.gov, *phone* 617.796.1144

team then presented the street view of the project and noted how the head house would work with the proposed new building behind it. It was noted that the main entrance of the building would be located on Armory Street in a shared plaza space and gathering point facing the Trader Joe's building. In the first floor of the head house, about 1/3 of the interior space would be taken up by the management offices with the rest to be used for meeting and community rooms and open patio space. The MWCD offices will be moving into the second floor of the head house and the organization would be the ongoing steward of the property. The team then reviewed the timeline for the project, noting that they were currently working on pre-development and permitting which they anticipated to be complete in the Fall, with construction to begin in 2025.

Ms. Comeau explained that the proposal would include 43 new units of 100% affordable, intergenerational housing. Fifteen of the units would be available to households below 30% AMI and the other 28 would be available to households below 60% AMI. The units would be supported by an operating subsidy so that residents only paid 30% of their current income. She gave examples of the types of households that might live in these units and the supportive services which they planned to have available. MWCD planned to hire an onsite Residential Services Coordinator to oversee these services and felt that they could provide a robust experience for the tenants that included physical, mental, and emotional health resources as needed. Ms. Comeau also noted that the property would be managed by Maloney Properties which was an established property management firm. She noted that they were working with other organizations as well, including Newton Wellesley Hospital which was providing funding for programs to assist with housing security and other services. She ended by stating that the MWCD's physical presence in the building would help them to provide robust services to the tenants.

Ms. Madden next addressed the project funding, explaining that having local funding was necessary to securing state and other funding sources. She reviewed the proposed project budget, noting that the construction was budgeted for \$21 million. With the reserve and soft costs, overhead and development fees, the total project cost was budgeted to be \$27,844,312. Ms. Madden explained that their funding plan was to max out the State funding sources, take advantage of passive house programs, and take out a building loan. The amount of the loan would be based on what the completed project could support. Ms. Madden stated that after assembling all of these sources, the project was left with a \$5 million gap which they were hoping to fill with the CPA and other City funding. This was proposed to include \$3 million in CPA funds, \$930,000 from CDBG funding, \$890,000 from the City's Inclusionary Zoning funds, \$118,000 in City HOME funds, and \$222,000 to come from West Metro HOME Consortium funds. This \$5 million from the City would allow the project to leverage \$22 million in State and other funds to meet the \$27 million project budget. Ms. Madden stated that by approving the City funding at this time, it would allow the project to advance forward through the planning and design process.

Mr. Brody asked Committee and Board members for questions at this time. Kelley Brown, Planning and Development Board, stated that he assumed that all of the capital expense figures were in current dollars and asked why it was not escalated for 2025. He asked how they were planning for future costs. Ms. Madden stated that they were basing their cost estimates on current comparable projects and understood that this was an uncertain market. They hoped that by 2025 some of the current volatility will have settled down. They would also refine the design and do value engineering as the project moved forward to manage the costs. She noted that they were also exploring using 4%

tax credits instead of their original plan for 9% tax credit as the funding amount was not capped for 4% tax credits and they could use those additional funds to offset any cost increases by raising additional tax credit funds. Mr. Brown stated that he understood that the State guidance was to expect to spend \$550,000 per affordable unit but that the proposed project would cost \$650,000 per affordable unit. He asked if this would be an issue for their State funding. Ms. Madden stated that the State has been involved with the project throughout the process and felt that they were in a good place.

Eliza Datta, CPC member, stated that she was also an affordable housing developer and was very excited to see a project with these deeper levels of affordability and intergenerational housing. She noted that both were much needed and was glad to see that services would also be provided. She thanked the City and staff for all their work on this project. She then noted that as a developer, she had been through the State funding process and agreed with the applicants on the importance of showing local support for the process.

Kevin McCormick, Planning and Development Board, asked about whether there were other expected uses coming up for the City's funds as he was concerned with using all of the City's available funding for this project. Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development, explained that there were no other large projects currently in the pipeline and that the project would use CDBG FY23 funding that was currently uncommitted as well as portions of both FY24 and FY25 anticipated funds. Peter Doeringer, Planning and Development Board, asked how much HOME funding would be allocated to the project. Ms. Berman answered that \$119,000 was the average amount that the City received for entitlement HOME funds and that they were setting aside one year of funding for this project. Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner, added that HUD required that the funds be used within two years and that 15% of the funding received be set aside for an established Community Housing Development Organization (CHODO) such as MWCD. He explained that the HOME Consortium funds would be allocated through an RFP process in the fall.

Mr. McCormick asked for more information on the resident services to be provided. Ms. Madden answered that a Resident Services Coordinator would be hired to work onsite in the MWCD offices 15 hours a week. Mr. McCormick asked if that number of hours would be enough for the residents living there and whether MWCD would be paying rent for their office spaces. Ms. Comeau answered that they had developed this plan by doing their best to try and assess the anticipated need for services. They were starting with 15 hours a week but since their offices would be onsite, they would be able to analyze the situation the program once it was underway. She noted that they would also work to connect residents to existing organizations in the community when that made sense.

Ms. Madden added that she had worked for other affordable housing development organizations and that 15 hours was the standard and generally seen to be the right amount. The MWCD offices would have an open door policy and hoped to have people come in when they were in need. She noted that they also had case managers on staff and had found that the model of having strong relationships with those other local organizations gave them the flexibility to provide the specific help that the individual resident needed. In terms of the rent, Ms. Madden noted that they were a small organization and that they were still several years away from moving into the new facility. She noted that their funding all went back into their project and development costs.

Mr. Doeringer asked the applicants to comment on the “Housing for Success” model and workforce development assistance that they planned to provide. Ms. Madden stated that “Housing for Success” was an overarching program that they used and explained how their intake process looked at each household’s financial needs as well as whether job training or financial independence coaching should be part of the support plan that the MWCD provides. They planned to provide residents with access to workforce trainings, resume assistance, etc.

Jennifer Molinsky, CPC Member and Planning and Development Board Member, stated that she was very much in favor of this project and was excited by the mix and different sizes of the units. She asked how they intended to fill the units with a mix of different ages and households. Ms. Molinsky also noted that there were five accessible units and asked if the other units would have universal design elements or be adaptable. Lastly, she also questioned the low number of hours for the resident services coordinator and suggested that they might do some early outreach on this issue as she thought that they might need more time. Mr. Bearden addressed the design components, explaining that they were currently working through the design and programming questions around what an intergenerational community might look like and need. They planned to design a building that was welcoming to residents of all ages and how they interacted and were considering how different elements were used by parents as compared to grandparents with kids or with their peers. They were planning to consider accessibility in the design and confirmed that all of the units would be adaptable and visitable.

Ms. Madden addressed the question of creating an intergenerational community. She explained that they had recently completed a family housing project in Medway and were beginning work on an adjacent senior housing site. By the time the Newton project was complete, they will have had several years of experience working with the two Medway sites to draw from. In terms of the amount of services provided, Ms. Madden stated that initial assessments when residents moved in were not enough and that they planned to use annual income certifications as an opportunity for more formal check-ins with residents on what they might need. She also thought that their Management Agent would play a key element in this process as they were often the first to notice changes in a household’s circumstances.

Martin Smargiassi, CPC Member, stated that he agreed with the comments made by previous CPC members. He asked for information on the total square footage on the project as well as the total unit square footage. He also wondered if there were any restrictions on the funding for the project and asked for more information on the job assistance and training programs. Mr. Bearden stated that the total square footage of the project, including common spaces, was 44,229 sf. This included 35,096 sf. of residential space, 3,525 sf. for the second floor offices, 1,599 sf. for the community room, 1,022 sf. for the management office, 986 sf. for the exhibit space, 500 sf. for the laundry and 1,503 sf. for bike storage. Mr. Bearden stated that there were no restrictions on the funding. Ms. Madden answered that the MWCD was building internal capacity to provide job assistance and training programs as well as working on building connections with organizations in Newton that had similar goals.

Robert Maloney, CPC Member, thanked the applicants for their presentation. He stated that he had looked at the overall capitalization of the project and noted that he had limited experience with affordable housing developments. He noted that the project was requesting \$3 million from CPA

funds and a total of \$5 million from the City and asked how typical it was to request this much funding. He felt that it was a large amount but was not sure based on the type of project, noting that the CPC had provided similar amounts for the Haywood House and Coleman House projects. He noted that this was in addition to the property itself and wondered how often local funding was used for close to 20% of a project and asked CPC members how they felt about this amount.

Ms. Madden stated that some level of local funding was always required for State funding requests and that this amount was in the range of what they had seen for other similar projects. She understood that this was a significant amount but noted that their aim was to achieve the ambitious goals set by the city for this site which included green technology, historic preservation, and sustainability. All of these were requested by the City and they felt that it was important to put together a realistic request in order to achieve them. Mr. Bearden agreed with Ms. Madden's summary of the need for this amount of local funding.

Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development and Planning and Development Board member, noted that this was not a typical recent affordable housing project as the aim was to provide family housing at deep subsidy levels. He agreed that the City had asked for a lot in its RFP when it asked to have the head house saved and sustainability considered, and noted that these requests came with a price tag that would be greater than what had been seen elsewhere.

Ms. Datta stated that the City of Somerville was funding about 25% of the project costs for an affordable housing development on a City site. She noted that these funding requests were often based on the community's resources.

Sue Parsons, co-chair of the Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG) that had considered the future of the West Newton Armory site and Engine 6 member, stated that she was very pleased to see this project moving forward. She noted the deep level of affordability in the project, with fifteen units to be available to households below 30% AMI, and that it was significant that the City was developing 43 units of affordable housing on a very public, well known site. She was delighted that this was under consideration and strongly encouraged both groups to consider it.

Mr. Brody closed the public hearing at this time. He stated that he thought this was a great project and confirmed that it would be 100% affordable units. He noted that most buildings had a 50-100 year life span and applauded the energy and sustainability work proposed here. He then asked if it would be possible to make all of the parking spaces electric charger ready. Mr. Bearden stated that it was possible and that the only reason that they had not revised the plans to show this was that they were currently in the middle of the development process. He stated that their team was conceptually in favor of this but needed to look at the revised design and budget before they could make that change. Mr. Smargiassi agreed with Mr. Brody and offered a technical & financial solution allowing, installing underground conduits for future chargers now so that they would be ready for wiring when funding was available in the future.

Mr. Brown stated that he also agreed with the comments that had been made and had also been part of the JAPG which had been concerned about any risks involved with developing a site with historic preservation issues. He knew that there was always a little confusion on how these risks could be managed and also achieve the required sign off from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)

to move the project forward. He asked how the applicants planned to manage that process. Ms. Madden stated that they had met with the Newton Historical Commission (NHC), which would be key to their success with the MHC. They were working with a preservation consultant and would be requesting a letter of support for the design of the project from the NHC that could be included with their Project Notification Form to the MHC. They did not anticipate any major issues with this review and noted that they planned to submit the form to the MHC by the end of the month, after which MHC would have 30 days to review it.

CPC members had no further questions at this time. Ms. Datta moved to recommend that the proposal for the construction of 43 units of 100% affordable housing at the former West Newton Armory be approved for full funding as submitted. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. Ms. Madden thanked the CPC and noted that April was Fair Housing month and that it was great to see the City voting to spend funding for affordable housing at this time.

Mr. Bencivengo gave the Planning and Development Board members a brief presentation summarizing the uses and sources of the requested CDBG, HOME and Inclusionary Zoning funding. He explained that \$1,938,000 was requested from these sources and provided a breakdown for the Board member's review, noting that it represented 7% of the project funding. Mr. Bencivengo explained that the CDBG funding was requested as a pre-approval for future funding years. He reviewed the details and amenities of the project and noted that the project aligned with the goals of the Washington Street Vision Plan. The Newton Housing Partnership had also voted in February to support the full funding of the project and staff recommended its approval.

Mr. Doeringer stated that this project would be looked at for its historic as well as its affordable housing goals and suggested that the Board should strongly endorse and consider the approval of the CDBG, HOME and Inclusionary Zoning funds as requested for permanently affordable housing. The motion was made and passed by the Planning and Development Board at this time. Mr. Doeringer recognized and thanked departing member Sudha Maheshwari for her work with the Board before closing their meeting at 8:20 P.M.

Review of Pre-Proposal for Jackson Homestead Basement Rehabilitation

Lisa Dady, Executive Director of Historic Newton, was present on behalf of the proposed project to address water and humidity issues with the basement of the Jackson Homestead. She noted that the Jackson Homestead is the City's museum and that the project was intended to move the building into the 21st century in terms of how they cared for and presented the museum's collections. She also pointed out the important of the project to the preservation of the building itself as well as the artifacts it holds. The project would address long standing moisture issues as well as make the space useable for gallery and workspace.

Ms. Dady explained that the project would focus on the preservation of the building by dealing with water infiltration and humidity issues. They would create a box in the basement that meets museum requirements. She noted that the space has an Historic Newton exhibit that was installed in the 1980s and is missing huge pieces of the City's history. They wanted to expand it and show more than what is there now but needed to deal with the space's existing problems first. Ms. Dady referred to the photos included in the pre-proposal of the existing conditions in the basement and explained that she

was working with Building Commissioner Josh Morse as well as architects Larry Bauer and Russ Feldman to develop the project and initial cost estimates. They planned to use 17% of the overall funding for the design work and to use the rest of the funds for construction. The first step of the project was to hire an engineering consultant to look at the space and access issues and the conditions of the collection storage areas. Ms. Dady referred to photos of the brick foundation and noted that it was damp enough that they could pull away handfuls of dirt and mortar. The basement vents had developed mildew and water condenses on and dripped from the ductwork, making it clear that the space adjacent to the exhibits was too humid. They had previously installed dehumidifiers in the space but these had also failed and begun to drip and were at best a temporary bandage for the humidity problems. CPA funding would be a critical piece of the funding needed to make the building sound.

Mr. Armstrong asked if the basement had ever been a successful space for museum exhibits. He thought that they might be fighting against the New England climate and was not sure how feasible it was to maintain exhibits in the basement area. Ms. Dady stated that this work was meant to be part of a longer range plan for the structure, which was a City landmark and had a preservation restriction on it. She explained that they wanted to improve access and space in the museum while also being careful to try and work with the existing footprint. They had been able to make the space work with a dehumidifier but this proposal was meant to be the more permanent solution to the issue. She thought that the project to both preserve the building and make the space suitable for exhibits could be done successfully and noted that the furnace and other existing equipment could be built into the climate control plan for the structure. The basement level was already accessible while the second floor of the building was not and that this project had the ability to save the City and non-profit a lot if done right.

Mr. Armstrong asked if the existing stone foundation would remain and Ms. Dady answered yes that the new museum space would be built inside the existing foundation. She also noted the design and construction funding information in the proposal. Mr. Smargiassi stated that he had a history of developing projects in historic buildings and thought the cost for this space was too high. He stated that he would like to take a look at the site and said that he had worked with a few contractors who had experience with this type of project. Ms. Dady welcomed members to visit and suggested that they could arrange a meeting with Commissioner Morse and the project architects to review the proposed work. She noted that City projects were often more expensive because they were required to use the public bidding process and prevailing wage and that materials were more expensive at present. She explained that they had wanted to give the CPC an overall look at the project and to be realistic about the costs but that it was possible that it could be less than the current estimate. Mr. Smargiassi explained that he had installed a 15 millimeter vapor barrier and concrete barrier in an historic structure and that it had cost closer to \$50,000 for a similar 1,400 sf. space. Ms. Dady stated that the work would also include some repairs to the existing foundation and address the specifications for the museum installation but agreed that it was possible that the final project could cost less.

Mr. Brody asked if the building was air conditioned. Ms. Dady stated that they currently used the same system for all three levels of the building which was not ideal. The building had a gas furnace and Ms. Dady noted that they would like to see the building become greener and were open to

considering an electric heat pump system. The proposed study would also consider these existing systems.

Ms. Molinsky stated that she could see that the building had issues and noted that there was a separation between what was needed structurally for the building and for the specific uses of the space. Ms. Dady stated that they had consulted with an exhibit designer, Cambridge 7, to see what would be needed to upgrade the 1980s exhibits as well as there were benefits to planning ahead for any electrical or systems work that might be needed.

Mr. Brody thought that it would be good to have more details on the non-profit side of this project and a sense of the bigger picture for their plans for the museum and building. Mr. Dunker stated that he would like to know what Martin and Mark thought after seeing the space as he believed having new viewers could be helpful to the project. Ms. Dady stated that they did have estimates to do the minimum mitigation possible to preserve the building and that those were lower than what was currently proposed. Mr. Brody noted that from the outside, part of the building appeared to be a garage and wondered how that space was used. Ms. Dady explained that that space housed the archives wing of the building and a small kitchen.

Ms. Molinsky moved to invite the applicants to submit a full proposal for the Jackson Homestead Basement Rehabilitation for review at a public hearing in the future. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion which passed unanimously by voice vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Review of Interactive Online Map

Members agreed that this should be added to the Community Preservation Program website. Ms. Lunin moved to add the link to the website and publicize the new resource. Mr. Smargiassi seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. Members were also encouraged to continue to review the interactive map and to let staff know if there were any suggestions for future changes.

Review of Current Finances

Ms. Kritzer noted the new projects that had been approved and added to the At A Glance report this month. She also briefly reviewed the status of the CPC's ongoing projects.

Approval of March 8 Minutes

Members had reviewed the draft minutes prior to the meeting. Ms. Lunin moved to approve the draft minutes for the March 8 meeting as submitted. Mr. Maloney seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote.

Designate Member for April Minute Review

Mr. Smargiassi volunteered to review the draft minutes for the April 12 meeting.

Mr. Maloney moved to adjourn. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion which passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 P.M.