

DATE: December 2, 2021
TIME: 9:14 AM

**Belmont Housing Trust
September 2, 2021**

Members attending: Rachel Heller, Betsy Lipson, Judie Feins, Paul Rickter, Madeline Fraser Cook, Judy Singler
Guests: Bonnie Friedman, Marty Bitner

Rachel began the meeting providing an overview of the McLean subcommittee's discussion, recommendations, and outstanding questions.

Marty Bitner from the Energy Committee explained the work and frequent communication they have had with the McLean developer, Jack Dawley from Northland, over the past few months. The developer plans to install electric for cooking appliances in the rental units. At this point they are still deciding on the energy source for hot water heating in the rental units as they weigh the costs for both gas and electric. Installing a gas line would be expensive.

For the homeownership townhouses there will be hybrid heat pump hot water heaters. The rental apartments heat might be natural gas for hot water because Northland isn't sure if there is a feasible option for an electric hot water heater.

Judie asked if the basement floors would be cold and whether that would make the first floor cold. Marty explained why that should not be a concern. Running a heat pump does not cool off the basement, plus it dehumidifies, which helps to keep the basement warm. The flooring will be either wood or laminate, both of which are not as cold as tile.

Rachel asked if at this point the Energy Commission knows if there will be a difference in utility costs between heat pumps and gas. Marty said a MA-focused study from a nationally renowned research group, the Rocky Mountain Institute, shows it would cost \$75 per year more for air source heat pumps than gas heating. Marty explained that going forward natural gas rates will likely increase. Payers will be more responsible for paying for infrastructural problems and the expectation is that gas will become more expensive over time. Belmont Light will offer 'time of use' rates, which allows residents to run their heat in off-peak hours. (Already Belmont Light offers a calculator that enables residents to assess savings had they used off-peak rates over the past year). Belmont Light might also provide decreased electricity rates based on household income. Madeline said research also shows the pollutants released by gas stoves can have negative health effects.

Marty said it will be important to remember that new McLean residents will need assistance using their heat pumps efficiently and effectively. Betsy said there is likely training available for tenants to show them how to optimize heat pump use to minimize spending.

Marty said the developer is aiming for LEED Silver certification. In addition to the interior features, the townhomes will have EV-ready wiring and there will be charging stations in about 10% of the parking lot spaces. In addition, the Energy Committee is working to maximize solar on the homeowner units. The developer is hesitant, as they are unsure if buyers would want solar panels. Currently, the discussion is focused on placement on the south-facing, 'back side' of homeownership market rate units.

Judie made a motion that the Trust accept the following three points from the Trust's subcommittee on McLean. These will be forwarded to the Planning Board as our recommendation. Judy Singler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Housing Trust agrees to forward the following comments for consideration to the Planning Board:

- Unit finishes—for durability and lower long-term replacement costs, the subcommittee recommends that: a) countertops be made of Corian or quartz rather than laminate; b) instead of acrylic tub surrounds, all units have age-friendly elements (i.e., grab bars), walk-in showers with tile and/or Corian or quartz finishes, and, if there is a second bathroom, that it have a tub with tile finishes.
- Unit size distribution—the Trust is in favor of a 1BR affordable homeownership unit, because it would have a lower price and could be attractive to the large number of Belmont seniors living alone or as couples. Northland has proposed that the remainder of the affordable units all be 2BR units, but this is not consistent with the IZ bylaw. The Trust recommends having 1 3BR affordable unit.
- Unit location—instead of all interior units (other than the Chapel 1BR), the subcommittee recommends that one of the 4 remaining 2BR units be an end unit.

Rachel shared her notes on Northland's estimated prices for the McLean property's affordable homeowner units:

- 1BR: \$200K
- 2BR: \$290– \$300K
- 3BR: \$325 – \$330K

Update on Cushing Square evacuated apartment

- Rachel updated us with tonight's news that residents will most likely be able to move in again starting next week.
- At least one household used funds from the Trust to relocate this week to a new home in town. There is a possibility that the state may provide funding to reimburse low-income residents who lost work hours due to the disruption.
- The Trust will recover the funds that were not used (which was most of the \$18K).

Past meeting minutes approved by the Trust tonight:

7/29/21 – Rachel, Betsy, Judie, Paul voted to approve the minutes as written. Abstained: Judy and Madeline

8/26/21 – Unanimous approval of the minutes as written.

8/10/21 - Unanimous approval of the minutes as written.

Meeting adjourned 9:35pm

Submitted by Betsy Lipson