

Belmont Housing Trust – Minutes for August 15, 2019 Meeting

2020 FEB 10 AM 10:31

Present: Judie Feins, Rachel Heller, Gloria Leipzig, Betsy Lipson, Paul Rickter, Jeremy Romanul, Judy Singler, Joe Zarro

Absent: Chuck Clark, Madeline Fraser Cook, Tommasina Olson

Guests: Kevin Maguire (Mass Housing Partnership), Julie Perkins (LWV), John Marshall (Assistant Town Administrator), Roger Colton, Stephen Pinkerton (interim Planning Board chair)

The meeting was called to order by Rachel at 7:32pm.

McLean Development Discussion. Rachel reported on recent conversations with Patrice Garvin and Adam Dash. The town is inclined to move forward as quickly as possible - goal of Fall 2019 Town Meeting. The idea of up to 65 affordable units was part of this discussion. This will need to be negotiated with McLean/Northland and the Town as soon as possible.

Kevin Maguire summarized the current state of our goals for more affordable housing and the town's wish for additional tax revenue. Kevin outlined the numbers of the current plan that's on the table, where six affordable townhouses raise the same property tax revenue as one market-rate townhouse; and four affordable flat units raise the same property tax revenue as one market-rate flat unit.

Walking through the options for working with the existing proposal, we could ask for a higher percent of affordable units, a higher level of affordability, a different bedroom mix, or whether to focus affordability on a mix of unit types. Going through options for changing the existing proposal, we could have a clearer separation between townhouses and flats, changing flats from ownership to rental (which could give us a higher number of units going toward our 10% of SHI), and changing some flats to Waverley Woods-type units. Other options for changing the existing proposal include focusing on who we are trying to serve and what different types of buildings serve these populations, as well as how changing building types might change the number of units available. Getting into ideas for major changes in the plan, what is physically possible and politically feasible? Or, thinking outside the box, are there potential additional parcels or funds that could be made available for affordable housing?

Judie asked whether we could tweak the existing proposal to preserve the number of market rate units while increasing the number of affordable units. Stephen said that under the existing proposal it may be hard to squeeze more market rate units into the plan. Joe expressed the wish that we maximize the number of affordable units and rental units in the flat buildings. Discussion about other buildable lots, including the parcel that's downhill from the proposed development along Olmstead Drive. Questions about who owns that parcel and how practical building units on it would be. Joe asked whether we could get more units, such as by adding more floors to the flat buildings. Rachel asked whether there's a chance that CPA money could help out somehow. Judie asked if there was a chance to divide the parcel and have part of the parcel developed by a developer who could do the affordable portion of the project.

Discussion on how to look at this from the developer's perspective and how to make it work for them while increasing the number of affordable units. For example, we could add one more floor to the flat building and increase the percentage of affordable units in them while forgoing affordable townhouses.

Principles that emerged from the discussion: inclusionary vs. strategic, rental, allocation of resources toward housing, adjacent land, percent of affordable units, who is being served?, SHI, leveraging town resources.

Motion: The Housing Trust exists to ensure compliance with State Affordable Housing requirements while working to address the specific housing needs of Belmont, as identified in the Housing Production Plan. It is critical that we use this opportunity to meet the needs of all Belmont residents. We are amenable to the concept of building 34 market-rate townhouses as proposed by Northland. We propose that the

development include a large rental component, in place of the 91-unit flats, with at least 25% of the units being affordable. And we are willing to forego affordable townhouses to further increase the number of affordable rental units beyond 25%. To increase the number of units in the rental buildings beyond the proposed 91, the number of floors might be increased to the most practical number of floors in a mid-rise building. And the rental buildings should include units that are attractive to families as well as seniors. Moved by Joe and seconded by Judy. Approved unanimously.

We may meet next on September 5, depending on developments in the coming weeks.

The committee adjourned at 9:58pm

Submitted by Paul Rickter