

Housing Trust Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2020
7:30 – 9:30 PM
Remote Meeting

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TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: November 20, 2020
TIME: 9:27 AM

Attendees: Judy Singler, Paul Rickter, Thayer Donham, Gloria Leipzig, Judie Feins, Rachel Heller, Betsy Lipson, Tommasina Olsen

Absent: Joe Zarro, Jeremy Romanul

Guests: Julie Perkins, League of Women Voters; Franklin Tucker, The Belmontonian

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Housing Trust reviewed the contract with Metro West Collaborative Development (MWCD). A motion was made by Judie Feins that the Housing Trust contract with MWCD and become a signatory to the contract as presented. Judy Singler seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion on expenses the Trust needs to authorize, for printer paper, envelopes, labels, stamps, and the nominal amount Belmont Light Department requests (\$58) for including the information flyer in bulk billing. A motion was made by Betsy Lipson that the Housing Trust authorize use of Housing Trust funds for an amount not to exceed \$1,500 to be used for marketing the Temporary Covid-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Paul Rickter seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Community Outreach Planning

Co-chairs report having conversations with Belmont Against Racism (BAR) and Belmont Media Center (BMC) about community outreach on the topic of racial segregation and housing. BAR is interested in establishing a subcommittee on this if enough residents express interest in forming the subcommittee. BMC is encouraging the Housing Trust to do a presentation on affordable housing and is interested in a Belmont version of an outreach and engagement community conversation series on race and housing, looking at forums in Arlington and Brookline as examples. These formative conversations will continue.

Other discussion points:

- Boston Globe article highlighting racial discrimination in Boston rental market. (July 1, 2020 article: *Researchers expected 'outrageously high' discrimination against Black renters. What they found was worse than imagined: Researchers fault real estate professionals who illegally ghost, steer away qualified renters*)
- Importance of focusing outreach messages on residents who are neutral or against affordable housing. One idea: connect with high school (and college students who are around/available).

Update on McLean

Discussion points:

- On the current plan to set aside 93 condos/rentals as age-restricted, question raised as to whether the market is favorable for this (i.e., occupancy rate projections for age-restricted housing), what a negative outlook would mean for future value of the property.
- Trust discusses potential rental rates at McLean by reviewing apartment rental costs at The Bradford, where rent is about \$3,400 for a 1-BR.
- Agreement that the current McLean plan with age restricted units is not ideal but it is still positive overall. In statement of support, Trust might consider stating that when the next large

development opportunity comes up in town, the Trust will only support a non-age restricted approach. In this case, the traffic limitations in the Town-McLean MOU limited Trust's ability to continue to advocate to eliminate age-restricted rentals.

- Discussion about the two bonus density units. Unresolved questions: will these units be age restricted? Will they be factored into the traffic analysis and if so, does this affect the TMMA?

40B Process

Trust reviews the MHP *Guidebook for ZBA on 40B* to build understanding of a Housing Trust's role. Guidebook explains that committees might be requested by a select board or later by ZBA to provide input, but the process does not specify that a planning board or a housing trust should conduct a vote to on a proposal.

Online materials Trust members were encouraged to review before the meeting:

- Information on the Beatrice Circle proposal and the Select Board's response on the Town's website (town website)
- MHP's Guidebook for ZBAs; particularly Chapter 4's one pager showing the process and timeline.
- Website set up by Beatrice Circle neighbors
- Letter from the developer to the Housing Trust (posted on Housing Trust's webpage)

Discussion included the following main points:

- Housing Trust members need to fully understand the 40B process, and that the Trust's opinion on a 40B proposal is not part of the official town process or the state review process.
- Trust members can respond to neighbor requests to meet with them to better understand their perspectives. It is not uncommon for proposed developments anywhere to cause neighbors to be upset. Trust members might be able to help neighbors by explaining the process and suggesting ways to work with the town and the developer to address neighbor concerns. For example, in the Beatrice Circle proposal, concerns and potential solutions that neighbors could raise might include speed mitigation on the access road, snow removal on the sidewalk, etc.

General Business

Trust reviews and votes to approve minutes from four past meetings: July 9, 10, 15, 20.

Meeting adjourns 9:30pm

Submitted by Betsy Lipson