

Belmont Housing Trust Minutes
Remote Meeting
March 18, 2021

Attendees: Paul Rickter, Betsy Lipson, Rachel Heller, Judie Feins, Gloria Leipzig, Tomi Olson, Judy Singler, Madeline Fraser-Cook

Guests: Vincent Stanton, Jess Hausman, Nicole Dorn, Ade Baptista

AGENDA

1. Community Preservation Act grants

a. Emergency rental assistance program update

- Total number of households served with 3- month assistances (phase 1 and 2 combined): 82
- Number of households served with the rental arrearage program: 20
- Number of remaining/existing applicants still being considered: 4
- Administrative costs already paid: 37 enrollees * 400 = \$14,800
- Administrative costs outstanding: 45 enrollees * 400 = \$18,000 + 114 apps * 50 = \$5,700
- Program expenses non-administrative: \$307,880 spent or committed
- Remaining funds: \$3,620

The Housing Trust reacted quickly to the pandemic and its predicted impact on renters, especially low-income households. Program utilization numbers show there was need. The state now has over \$400M for rental assistance.

- b. Status of new proposal for 4th month to support program participants in arrears
- The Warrant Committee presentation on 3/17/21 presentation went well. Warrant Committee will vote on this in two weeks.

2. Community outreach and education: Review Housing Production Plan (HPP)

- a. Rachel presented an overview of the HPP: it was approved in April 2018 by the Planning Board and Select Board; in May 2023 the HPP it expires, and the Trust needs to think about renewing it beginning at least a year before.
- b. Trust discussed progress on HPP goals and available opportunities for each of the strategies identified in the HPP, including:
- Strategy One: Maximize Transit Oriented Development. The HPP identified Waverly Square, South Pleasant Street, McLean, Moraine Street site, Belmont Center, Trapelo Road corridor.
 - Judie noted that assisted living isn't popular now post Covid and asked if it would be better for the Planning Board to rezone South Pleasant Street for multi-family? Thayer explained the Planning Board is waiting to see the state guidance as to whether this area constitutes a large enough zone for this.

- Strategy Two: Focus on Revitalization and preservation of existing affordable housing (e.g., Sherman Gardens and Belmont Village).
 - Gloria noted the CPC is supportive of the Housing Authority's efforts. Madeline said the Housing Trust could be proactive in supporting energy efficient affordable housing.
- Strategy Three: Supporting the Redevelopment of underutilized and industrial sites (vacant gas station on Blanchard, former Purecoat site, any religious property or land that becomes available).
 - Judie re-stated her desire that the Housing Trust revisit what more could be done on South Pleasant street.
 - Gloria pointed out there are more areas the Planning Board could focus on, and the Housing Trust should make sure they think broader than South Pleasant.
 - Rachel and Betsy said the Trust could look broader than the existing overlay and whether it could be combined with a new zone for Waverly.
 - Guest Vincent Stanton suggested that at the Purecoat site the family owners (Tosi), and the general manager, Tom Mahoney, may be open to dialogue about selling this site. Also, Mr. Stanton commented that Crate Escape is in a very attractive location and underutilizes that site.
- Strategy Four: Use CPA funds creatively for new programmatic activities.

c. Discussion to identify new actions and priorities for 2021-2022.

- Judy said Council on Aging is recommending age-friendly housing and accessory dwelling units (ADU).
- Thayer explained that Planning Board will be focused for next few months on McLean's site plan review. And that once DHCD issues guidance on the new multi-family zoning legislation, the Planning Board will have a better understanding of what to do.
- Rachel suggested the Housing Trust form a subcommittee on accessory dwelling units (ADU) and another on Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
- MA towns must have 7 out of 14 best practices to be a Housing Choice community. An ADU policy is a best practice.
- Tomi, Judy, Thayer volunteer to form a subcommittee on ADUs.
- Rachel, Madeline, Judie, Gloria, Thayer volunteer to form a subcommittee on multifamily zoning opportunities.

3. **Subcommittee update: Forum on Fair Housing April 29, 2021 7-9pm.** This event is being co-sponsored by Housing Trust, Belmont Against Racism, Human Rights

Commission, and Belmont Media Center. Judie provided an update on the subcommittee's work.

4. Discussion on the override ballot question.

- a. Paul, who also serves on the Warrant Committee, presented an update from the WC discussions on the override, including the following points:
 - i. WC unanimously voted to support the override. He said the WC comes out with a report annually that is an analysis of the budget. In reviewing the past few reports, the first page states the need for an override.
 - ii. Paul said the town has done a lot of good things to stretch the last override to six years. The WC thought the most prudent thing was a \$6.4M override.
 - iii. When Covid hit, the town paired back on spending. This built up a large amount of free cash. The thought was tax revenue would be down. There's no way to maintain the same level of services with prop 2 ½ .
 - iv. If the override doesn't pass, the free cash will be spent down and next year there will likely be another request for an override.
 - v. The structural impact committee, which is looking for new revenue and additional ways to cut costs and save money, collected nearly 100 ideas from residents. They are planning to present a report on this to the Select Board.
- b. Housing Trust discussion on the override:
 - i. Tomi said this is not the time for an override and that we should take the time to allow the structural change committee to identify options.
 - ii. Guest Mr. Stanton suggested that ADUs would be a good way to address seniors' concerns about cost of living.
 - iii. Guest Jess Hausman noted that budget cuts would increase disparities in that the public schools would not be able to hire math coaches and the senior center would not be able to hire a social worker.
 - iv. Guest Nicole Dorn, chair of the Yes committee, advocated for support of the override.
 - v. Guest Ade Baptista noted the role the Housing Trust could play in changing zoning to encourage more mixed-use and business development, which could increase commercial tax revenue in the future.

5. General business

- Approve past meeting minutes.
 - 1.14.21 minutes approved unanimously.
 - 2.1.21 subcommittee minutes approved. Paul and Judy abstain.

Meeting adjourned 9:30pm