

Belmont Housing Trust Minutes for 8/24/09

In Attendance—Judie Feins, Roger Colton, Gloria Leipzig, Alisa Gardner-Todreas, Chuck Laverty, Jonathan Jacoby

Inclusionary Zoning By-Law—This meeting was called to discuss the current work of the joint committee (Housing Trust, Planning Board and Office of Community Development) to consider and recommend amendments to the Town’s Inclusionary Zoning By-Law. Roger and Gloria reported on recent meetings, including with representatives of the developer which is proposing development in Cushing Square. The next meeting is at the end of the week.

The current By-Law has the effect of requiring that 25% of developed housing units after a certain threshold level be affordable. There is reason to think that this percentage is too high to make development economically feasible. Cambridge’s requirement is 15% and, with incentives, effectively 12%. Roger asked Anne Reitmeyer to review the issue and understands that her report concludes that 25% is not economically feasible.

Roger provided a draft of the proposed By-Law dated 8/10/09 and circulated by Jay Szklut, the Town’s Planning and Economic Development Manager. Using this draft as a basis for discussion, Roger made a number of recommendations for modifications in the draft By-Law.

- 1 Expenditures from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund should be authorized by the Belmont Housing Trust, not the Board of Selectmen.
- 2 While the staggered percentages required for affordable units (both rental and ownership) of 10%, 12.5% and 15% seem right, he thinks the break points should be 12 or fewer, 13-40 and 41 or more.
- 3 Any cash payment a developer may make in lieu of an affordable unit or for the fractional calculation of a unit shall be paid to the Housing Trust for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, not the Town. Discussion centered around how to devise a multiplier that would create a greater incentive to make an in-lieu-of payment as the price of the market units goes up. The money accrued would be preferable to a high-end affordable unit.
- 4 The round-up fraction when the calculation of affordable units results in a fractional unit should be .60, not .65.
- 5 The exemption of owner built and occupied two and/or three-family homes is acceptable.
- 6 It was agreed that the definition of Mixed-Use Residential Development should be broadened from applicability to only the “Town’s commercial zoned districts” and apply to more than just “retail” as the commercial use.

7 The provision for accessible units was thought not clear enough; 5% might be used as the minimum with some language requiring accessible units depending on the size of the project.

8 The one-time “oversight and monitoring fee” should not be paid to the Belmont Housing Trust, but rather reflect an on-going responsibility for monitoring affordability with funds going to compensate the Town for its monitoring obligations.

The goal is to have an amended By-Law ready for Town Meeting in November. The Planning Board will need to move forward with hearings early this fall.

Submitted by Jonathan Jacoby