

Belmont Housing Trust Minutes for 2/24/09

In Attendance: Roger Colton, Judie Feins, Jonathan Jacoby, Nancy Marsh, Carla Moynahan, Ann Silverman, Ann Verrilli, Jennifer Gooden

Minutes—Minutes for meeting on 1/15/09 were approved as corrected.

Introductions—Introductions were made to welcome Jennifer Gooden, a new resident of Waverley Woods.

BHT Record-keeping—Jonathan reported on progress in categorizing the BHT records collected. In response to his questions about how much to hold on to it was thought best to keep more rather than less—newspaper accounts and reports from towns and regions outside Belmont and Massachusetts. The Westlaw documents will be returned to Roger to evaluate.

Five-town Consortium—Ann S. and Ann V. will attend the next meeting on March 5; Gloria may as well.

February 26—State Rep. Will Brownsberger has called a meeting to discuss a 40B bill drafted by the Municipal Coalition for Affordable Housing (MCFAH). Ann V. explained that the bill is largely an attempt to weaken 40B legislation. Roger will attend.

Our Lady of Mercy—Ann S. reported that Ron Lopez has presented plans for a development of the church campus site that is being discussed tonight at a meeting of the Oakley Neighborhood Association. Ann has seen the plans and spoken to Jay Szklut, raising with him questions about homeownership or rental, financing of affordable units, price of market units, start time and duration, long-term affordability, design and guarantee of follow-through. The proposal call for replacing the church and rectory and building 17 units. Ann will follow up with Jay and see if the Trust can have a meeting with the developer.

Inclusionary Zoning—Carla and Judie reported on the presentation of the inclusionary Zoning Rules and Regulations by the Planning Board to the Board of Selectmen. The BOS were reluctant to act on approving the regulations and asked for further clarification, particularly about the experience with inclusionary zoning in other, similarly sized towns. The point was made to the BOS that it is important these regulations be in place as soon as possible and a commitment was made to submit the requested information.

Condo Conversion—Roger explained that the purpose of a town policy on condo conversions was to preserve rental housing stock. He reported on the progress of researching what such a policy might contain, raising a number of questions that need to be addressed. There does not seem to be a template available that can be easily adapted for our use. He distributed copies of draft

condo conversion ordinances from Oakland, California; one more “progressive” and one less so.

Some of questions he asked were:

- 1 Do we want a fee that raises money for developing affordable housing, or a fee that discourages conversions?
- 1 Are we concerned with all conversions or only about those associated with some form of speculation?
- 1 Are we interested in tenant protection?
- 1 Does it make a difference if the owner converting a building is also a resident of that building?

There was general agreement that the Trust is interested in tenant protection and to keep housing that is permanently affordable and as much rental stock as possible. There was some discussion of examples of policies on owner-occupied conversions in DC and Cambridge.

Roger explained that Town Meeting would have to ask for state approval to impose a fee, whereas a general by-law could impose restrictions to protect tenants. He will continue to work with Ann S. and Gloria on this issue.

CPA Discussion—At this point in the meeting the Housing Trust board was joined by nine members of the public for a discussion of the feasibility of putting the Community Preservation Act on the ballot in Belmont. The discussion ranged from how much money might be raised if the tax surcharge was approved, to what the town’s needs are that these funds could be used for (historic preservation, affordable housing, protection of open space, recreation use), to strategies for developing a campaign, to the timing of the election cycle over the next two years, and to questions about how other towns were successful in adopting CPA. There was agreement that we should continue this conversation. Judie will send around the notes from the meeting and we will come together again at the Trust’s regularly scheduled meeting on March 19, 2009.

Submitted by Jonathan Jacoby