

Selectboard & Planning Board Housing Subcommittee Meeting via Zoom  
Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Approved

1. CALL TO ORDER HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING – Chairperson Leigh Davis called to order the Selectboard and Planning Board Housing Subcommittee meeting at 5:07pm.
2. ROLL CALL - Leigh Davis, “present,” Jeremy Higa, “present”, Malcolm Fick, “present”. Members not present: Garfield Reed
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Mr. Higa suggested a change related to his response during Citizens’ Speak Time. Mr. Fick moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Higa seconded. All present voted “yes”.
4. SUBCOMMITTEE’S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS  
None
5. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Members presented the results of their investigations of several items on the Housing Plan Worksheet.
    - i. Mr. Fick presented a summary of Item 21 – matchmaking tenants and landlords.
      - His conclusion was that a 3rd party would have to run such a program and would likely require a study of the local rental market to assess demand.
      - Ms. Davis presented a brochure describing a Home Sharing Program that matches seniors with potential tenants in New York.
      - Mr. Higa raised questions about the feasibility of the Town offering such a service. It was generally agreed that the Town would be unlikely to have staff for it.
      - Ms. Vivian Orlowsky requested to speak on the issue. She suggested that the Town might fund a program that could be operated by a non-profit such as Construct or Elder Services.
      - Mr. Higa said that this would be unlikely to qualify for CPA funds.
      - Ms. Orlowsky volunteered to further research this issue.
    - ii. Mr. Fick presented a summary of Item 18 – ADU programs.
      - Mr. Fick described two aspects of a program that would encourage ADU’s. First would be an education/awareness program to inform homeowners of the benefits of ADU’s and the process for creating one. The second part of the program would be incentives for creating affordable ADU’s. He concluded that this would be low risk in that most of the funds would be for incentives which would only be paid out if the program worked.
      - Ms. Davis described such a program in Burlington, Vermont. She pointed out that people have had difficulty financing ADU’s through normal channels.
      - Mr. Higa suggested that the Town’s Affordable Housing Trust might be able to process incentive grants and/or loans. He further suggested that the Town may

benefit from having a staff position for housing initiatives.

- iii. Ms. Davis presented a summary of item 20 – Local Option for Real Estate Transfer Fees.
  - Ms. Davis described the program in Boston where an additional transfer tax is imposed on sales that are greater than the median house price.
  - Ms. Davis said that CHAPA (Citizen’s Housing and Planning Association) is advocating for a legislative change that would enable towns to enact such a transfer tax supplement. For now, a Home Rule Petition to the legislature is required for each town contemplating such a tax. The first step would have to be approval of a Home Rule Petition by Town Meeting.
  - Ms. Davis suggested that such a petition be created and offered to the Selectboard for inclusion in the next ATM warrant.
  - Mr. Higa asked if the legislature passes legislation enabling a transfer tax surcharge for all towns, it might conflict with or invalidate any previously issued Home Rule grant. Mr. Fick expressed his opinion that any general legislation would be unlikely to impact Home Rule legislation passed by the same body, but he agreed with Mr. Higa that it was worth questioning.
  - Ms. Davis said that she is in the process of finding out how much would be in play with various tax thresholds and tax amounts. She will report back at the next meeting.
- iv. Mr. Garfield joined the meeting
  - Mr. Garfield addressed the issue of “Aging in Place” and suggested partnering with vocational schools for lower cost home repairs.
- v. Ms. Davis introduced a new item, number 24 – A property tax exemption for owners of year-round affordable housing rental.
  - Ms. Davis described a program in Provincetown where homeowners get a tax exemption equal to the square footage percentage of their home that is used for affordable rental. The exemption is calculated annually.
  - Mr. Higa expressed support for this program as a way of helping homeowners retain their homes.
  - As with the transfer tax surcharge, Ms. Davis said this would require a Home Rule Petition.
- vi. Mr. Higa introduced a spreadsheet prepared by Chris Rembold that shows the affordable vs. market rate rental rates for various family sizes and AMI affordability thresholds.
- vii. Mr. Higa suggested that the Subcommittee weed out the items in the worksheet that are already being done. He presented the example of Item 1 concerning blighted properties and said the Town is already addressing this.

The members agreed.

viii. Mr. Higa led a discussion of item 10 – the deed restriction purchase program.

- As described in the worksheet, he said the program would require town administration, perhaps through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- Mr. Higa is of the opinion that this program would qualify for CPA funding.

6. NEXT MEETING DATES –Tuesday, January 3 at 5pm.

7. CITIZENS SPEAK TIME

- a. Ms. Orlowski said that the Senior Tax Deferral program is not being used very much. She described an initiative to pass legislation that would have the state fund and collect senior tax deferrals and take the towns out of the financial loop.

8. SUBCOMMITTEE’S TIME – No members requested to speak.

9. MEDIA TIME – No media members requested to speak at this time

10. ADJOURNMENT – M. Fick made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Higa seconded the motion. All voting yes, Chairperson Davis adjourned the meeting at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Fick, Vice Chairperson