

Selectboard & Planning Board Housing Subcommittee Meeting via Zoom
Friday, November 4, 2022

Revised & Approved

1. CALL TO ORDER HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING – Chairperson Leigh Davis called to order the Selectboard and Planning Board Housing Subcommittee meeting at 5:00pm.
2. ROLL CALL - Leigh Davis, “present,” Jeremy Higa, “present,” Garfield Reed, “present,” Malcolm Fick, “present”.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –
 - a. Mr. Reed moved to approve the minutes of August 9, 2022. Mr. Fick seconded. Ms. Davis, Mr. Fick, and Mr. Reed voted yes. Mr. Higa abstained.
 - b. Mr. Reed moved to approve the minutes of September 20, 2022, 2022. Mr. Fick seconded. Ms. Davis and Mr. Reed voted yes. Mr. Higa and Mr. Fick abstained.
 - c. Mr. Reed moved to approve the minutes of October 6, 2022. Mr. Fick seconded. Ms. Davis, Mr. Fick and Mr. Reed voted yes. Mr. Higa abstained.
 - d. Mr. Reed moved to approve the minutes of October 18, 2022. Mr. Fick seconded. Ms. Davis, Mr. Fick and Mr. Reed voted yes. Mr. Higa abstained.
4. SUBCOMMITTEE’S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS
 - a. Ms. Davis welcomed Mr. Higa to the committee as the newest representative of the Planning Board. Mr. Higa expressed his pleasure at being a member.
 - b. Mr. Reed said that everyone was likely aware of a disagreement with former member Jonathan Hankin and expressed his wish to move beyond any dispute.
5. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Ms. Davis introduced the updated Housing Plan Worksheet and asked Mr. Fick to present his marked up copy and explain his suggestion regarding the use of the Goal and Objectives, Effort, and Impact columns.
 - b. Mr. Fick explained the markings he made on the sheet, displayed by Ms. Davis.
 - i. He said that to estimate the Effort and the Impact of a proposal, he categorized them in the Goals and Outcomes column. In that column he used
 1. “Housing” to indicate those that would directly lead to more housing
 2. “Affordable” for those projects that would directly lead to more affordable housing from existing housing stock
 3. “AIP” for those projects that directly help repair and/or retain existing housing.
 4. “Enable” for efforts that affect housing indirectly by enabling or incentivizing others to create housing.
 5. “Info” for projects that give information about housing opportunities to stakeholders.
 - ii. Mr. Fick said that, in general, the direct “Housing” projects would seem to have more of an impact than “Info” or “Enable” projects.

- iii. Mr. Higa suggested that the time needed to implement a project is also an important prioritization criterion. Mr. Fick suggested that timeframe can be added to the Effort evaluation, similar to how he used dollar signs to indicate funding needs.
- c. Mr. Reed requested a discussion of the Mahaiwe Block and the former BCC building with regards to affordable housing in these buildings. Mr. Higa said that at the recent CPC meeting, Ian Rasch said that affordable units were included in his plan. Mr. Higa praised Mr. Rasch for revitalizing housing stock in the town and being willing to make some of them affordable.
- d. Ms. Davis introduced a general discussion of the Housing Plan Worksheet.
 - i. Ms. Davis described the coding of the Goals & Outcomes column to correspond with Mr. Fick's verbiage. "1" for New Housing; "2" for Shift to Affordable; "3" for Retain existing housing; "4" for Enable housing indirectly; "5" for Fund required, and "6" for Info about housing opportunities.
 - ii. Ms. Davis expressed an interest in identifying priorities that could be accomplished this year. Mr. Fick expressed his opinion that, given the complexity of many of the initiatives, a reasonable goal may be to simply finish the Housing Plan Worksheet by year-end.
 - iii. Mr. Garfield asked for an explanation of the Senior Tax Exemption item. Ms. Davis explained that this was part of the Boston program that was partially funded by a transfer tax surcharge that was authorized by Home Rule Charter legislation. She said it still needs homework to see if it could work here.
 - iv. Ms. Davis introduced discussion of the first item on the Worksheet concerning blighted properties. She said that Construct is participating in the Attorney General's Abandoned House Receivership Program to fix up an abandoned house in Becket and sell it with an affordable property restriction.
 - 1. Mr. Higa said that it seems like a good program but asked if the Town will fix up properties.
 - 2. Mr. Reed asked if there are blighted properties in Great Barrington. Ms. Davis pointed to Stonegate and the Grove Street Property recently taken over by the Affordable Housing Trust.
 - 3. Mr. Higa asked about the effort required for this program. Ms. Davis said that it's a great deal of effort for Construct, having to deal with the courts, lawyers, the Attorney General's office and paperwork, not to mention the work of rehabbing the property.
 - v. Mr. Fick pointed to the amount of time the committee spent discussing a single item on the Worksheet and suggested that each member take two or three items that they would study in detail. The members concurred with this suggestion.
 - vi. Ms. Davis added two columns to the Worksheet: one for an item number and one for member assignments. She then asked for members to volunteer for items on the Worksheet.
 - 1. Mr. Higa offered to take items #1 (the Abandoned Housing Receivership Program) and #10 (the Deed restriction purchase program).
 - 2. Mr. Reed offered to take item #3 (grants for rehabbing or converting homes to two family).

3. Mr. Fick offered to take item #18 (ADU and tiny home incentives) and #21 (Match-making program).
 4. Ms. Davis offered to take #20 (the Local Option Transfer Tax).
 5. Ms. Davis and Mr. Reed jointly volunteered to take #8 (AIP program), and #19 (expand property tax relief for low-income seniors)
6. NEXT MEETING DATES – Tuesday, December 6 at 5pm. and Tuesday, January 3 at 5pm.
1. CITIZENS SPEAK TIME
 - a. Mr. James Garzon suggested that developers could be given incentives or discounts for rehabbing senior and affordable homes. Mr. Reed supported Mr Garzon’s idea but expressed concern about projects such as the Mahaiwe Block rehab resulting in less affordable housing. Mr. Higa said that with the cost of construction, builders needed incentives to be able to afford to create affordable units.
2. SUBCOMMITTEE’S TIME – No members requested to speak.
3. MEDIA TIME – No media members requested to speak at this time
4. ADJOURNMENT – M. Fick made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Higa seconded the motion. All voting yes, Chairperson Davis adjourned the meeting at 6:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Fick, Vice Chairperson