

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
January 22, 2019
Brookline Town Hall – Room 111
(Approved at HAB meeting of February 26, 2019)

Members: Roger Blood, Jonathan Klein , Steven Heikin, Jennifer Raitt

Staff: Virginia Bullock and Edward Bates

Guests: **Trevor Johnson, Economic Development Planner**

Roger Blood called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes from December 17, 2018 HAB meeting

HAB Members **VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes from the December 17, 2018 meeting as presented. Jennifer Raitt abstained from the vote.

2. Update on Boylston Street Corridor Visioning Process and Planning Study (EDAB)

Trevor Johnston, Economic Development and Long-Term Planner for the Town of Brookline presented an update on the Boylston Street Corridor Visioning Process and Planning Study. This is a community-driven process led by Tom Nally, member of the Economic Development Advisory Board and the Greater Point Neighborhood Association. The Town formed a small committee to guide the visioning process and is focusing on the section between Washington Street to Milton Road.

The Committee reviewed prior studies on the corridor and has focused on high-level recommendations which can be implemented by the Town. With development in the area increasing, the Committee wants to be proactive in planning for the corridor before major projects are planned by outside developers. This is a long-term process over a five to ten year period.

The Committee has met three times since August and created a vision statement which focuses on the area as an urban corridor, while also providing a list of recommendations. On January 16, 2018, a Community Open House was hosted by the Visioning Committee in which 70+ residents attended. New zoning changes will hopefully be proposed from the Town over the next nine to twelve months.

Trevor stated that there is an up-to-date website for the visioning process and the planning study. Jonathan Klein asked what the ideas were concerning housing in the corridor. Trevor stated that the vision is to have a mixed-use district, though conversation has focused more on design rather than use. The Committee continued discussion on particular sites that may be appropriate for mixed-use development, including adaptive reuse for housing at the old Lincoln School.

Roger Blood stated that the Town has adopted a Housing Production Plan that identifies major corridors, including the Boylston Street Corridor, for affordable housing and mixed-use development; he would like to see convergence between that plan and the Boylston Street Corridor Planning Study. Roger furthered that Form-Based Zoning education could also be provided as the Town explores improved zoning and design guidelines for the corridor.

3. Project Update on BHA Preservation Initiative – RAD Conversions of Federal Properties

Marie Maffei from the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) provided an update on the RAD conversion of federal properties. The conversion will begin with O’Shea House with construction projected to begin in the spring.

The BHA submitted their finance plan to HUD before the holidays but it has not been reviewed at this time, due to the shutdown of the federal government. Currently, they are in the construction manager selection procedure where they have issued an RFQ, followed by an RFP, selected three applicants, and are currently negotiating pricing with the top choice..

Construction drawings are slated to be completed in March which will allow time for the Construction Manager to work with the BHA before 100% drawings. There has been extensive public outreach to residents and they are proposing air conditioning, improved lighting, roll-in showers, and other amenities to allow for aging-in-place..

The development team is nearly complete. The Attorneys are on board and they have a project manager and architect. The final RFP issued is for a consultant who will assist the BHA staff with tax credit compliance training as they will manage the properties themselves.

The BHA currently has tax credit equity investors on board. They are also transitioning out of 100% RAD and allowing some project-based Section 8 vouchers which provide higher rents allowing for more funding toward construction.

The BHA is taking advantage of the pre-development funding which the Town provided and has drawn down \$265,000 out of \$400,000 to date. The majority of these funds will be paid back to the Town when they close on O’Shea.

Roger Blood asked if the BHA plans to come back to the HAB for longer term funding. Marie Maffei stated that the BHA expects to come back to the HAB in the spring to request funding for Morse as that project can’t support as much work as O’Shea.

4. CDBG Advisory Committee – HAB member appointee

Roger Blood stated that Rita McNally has volunteered and will be the HAB designee to serve on the CDBG Committee.

5. Further Discussion on Inclusionary Zoning By-law proposed changes

Roger Blood stated that he has a call in to Pam McKinney to begin discussing the financial feasibility analysis of changes to the Inclusionary Zoning bylaw. Ken Lewis may also be assisting by creating a template for the type of financial analysis that is needed. There is hope to have the proposed changes to the bylaw in a fall warrant which provides enough time to work with Pam McKinney.

Jennifer Raitt asked if the bylaw is strict to just 80% and 50% AMI and if the HAB is looking at different levels. Roger stated that the HAB is not fixed at any certain level, although rental housing will be targeting a lower income range than owner-occupied affordable units. Steven Heikin added that 80% and 50% are the same as Chapter 40Bs and asked Jennifer if there is any reason to move away from those numbers. Jennifer stated that she was not sure, but the Town could conduct a nexus study to assist in understanding what the correct contribution should be and recommends reviewing Somerville’s bylaw.

Virginia Bullock stated that there have been very few units added through inclusionary zoning and will provide those numbers to the HAB at the next meeting.

6. UPDATES – AirBnB

Virginia Bullock stated that the state recently passed a law to allow municipalities to levy a local tax on short-term rentals such as Airbnb. The new law provides for a 6% state tax for general use and an optional 6% local tax which municipalities may elect to receive. The Department of Revenue will collect local funds and remit them directly to the Town, similar to a local room tax on hotels.

The Town's zoning is silent on short-term rentals and it is questionable whether the Town will need to make them legal in order to collect the tax. The Department of Planning and Community Development is researching this topic and drafting a warrant article for Spring Town Meeting.

In addition to the state and local tax, the Town could also vote to charge an impact fee of up to 3% in which a minimum of 35% of that fee income must be used for affordable housing or infrastructure. The impact fee can be levied on professionally managed short-term rentals where the owner owns 2+ short term rentals in the same municipality. The Town would need to collect the fee directly, which would require an internal structure to implement..

Virginia stated that the Town may utilize the Cambridge model which limits the numbers of days a year a person can utilize a residence as an AirBnB and limits the buildings to four units or less. Virginia furthered that the 3% excise tax should be pursued, but the Board should wait to receive some data first before moving further.

HAB members felt that the impact fee for affordable housing should be pursued as part of the initial Warrant Article.

7. UPDATES – Kent-Station Street Senior Housing Study Committee – Status of Draft RFP

Roger Blood stated that HAB had received a copy of the Kent/Station Street Draft RFP to review. The Draft RFP is ready to seek Select Board approval, but the HAB should provide feedback before it is submitted. Roger asked the HAB to specifically review the priority lists in the Draft RFP.

The HAB then reviewed the priority lists, specifically asking how these sections will be scored. Roger stated that a new committee will be formed and they will score the proposals. The HAB recommended eliminating the section which states the required apartment sizes and replacing it with a sentence that the apartment sizes must be in compliance with applicable state and federal subsidy programs. Also, the HAB recommended shaving off time from the timeline in the RFP as it appears to be a long period for project approval.

8. UPDATES – Affordable Senior Housing Project at 370 Harvard Street (2Life)

Virginia Bullock stated that the Select Board approved the HAB's recommendation for an additional \$500,000 from the Housing Trust to 2Life Communities for the 370 Harvard Street project, which will bring total Town-authorized assistance to \$3mm. The first business meeting was held recently to discuss the closing, but 2Life Communities is waiting for several approvals from HUD to move forward.

9. UPDATES – Coolidge Corner Study Committee update on proposal for rezoning Waldo/Durgin garage sites

Roger Blood stated that the Coolidge Corner Study Committee voted unanimously to support the project to move to the next step of drafting an up-zoning article to present to the May Town Meeting. An Architectural Subcommittee was formed under the Study Committee to work out design and massing issues within the project. With the Committee's vote, the project can now move forward to Spring Town Meeting.

10. Update on Newbury College Site

Roger Blood stated that Newbury College is currently talking with brokers to put the property on the market. The Select Board has appointed a committee to work with a consultant to lay the groundwork for a credible bid to acquire the property. Some members of committee include former HAB member Kathy Spiegelman and current HAB and Planning Board member Steven Heikin. Steve stated that he discussed the property with the Economic Development Advisory Board and that the property could be re-parceled as there are sections appropriate for single family homes with denser development abutting the Olmstead Hill site.

Roger Blood stated that there will be spirited discussion on the large Academic Building on the property which could possibly be used as temporary or longer term school space. Virginia furthered that the a group of citizens have filed a warrant article relating to acquisition of Newbury and the scheduling of a Special Town Meeting in April.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.