

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
February 25, 2020
Brookline Town Hall – Room 408

Members: Roger Blood, Steve Heikin, Michael Jacobs, Bill Madsen Hardy, Jennifer Raitt

Staff: Virginia, Bullock, Edward Bates, Victor Panak

Guests: Jeff Wachter, Brookline for Everyone

Roger Blood called the meeting to order at 7:05PM

1. Approval of minutes from January 28, 2020 HAB meeting

HAB members **VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2020 with revisions.

2. Cypress Lofts: Recommended plan to support transfer of seven affordable low-income rental units

Roger stated that the Brookline Improvement Coalition had planned to purchase these properties from the current owner but has pulled out of the deal as they are not currently in a place to obtain a bank loan. The current owner would like to sell the units at a price of \$1.55 Million. Bill Madsen Hardy noted that this price is too high for these units.

Roger explained that these properties would be appropriate to be sold to a local Community Development Corporation (CDC). If a local CDC cannot purchase the properties, he asked the HAB to explore other regional CDCs. Bill Madsen Hardy said that he would talk to the Jamaica Plain CDC. Jennifer Raitt also mentioned that Jennifer Van Campen from the Metro West Collaborative Development may also be interested in these properties.

3. Inclusionary Zoning: Possible HAB-sponsored zoning bylaw amendment to authorize increased/expanded fee schedule

Roger handed a Petition sheet to members of the HAB which presented an abbreviated amendment to the current Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) Bylaw. When submitted with the required number of signatures, this Petition will become a Warrant Article to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting in May. Roger explained that after the presentation and fee increase recommendations by Pam McKinney, it would make sense to move ahead with these four small **changes** to the Bylaw as this will enable the increased fee schedule to be adopted sooner, thereby generating added revenue to the Trust Fund that otherwise would be lost, pending a Town Meeting vote in November.

Roger also noted that the HAB as a Board could not be the Petitioner on a Warrant Article but, as with the recent ADU Article, HAB members would show their support by signing on as individual Petitioners.

The HAB discussed the proposed warrant article. Members expressed approval of the small changes.

Roger noted that Alison Steinfeld, Director of Planning and Community Development, is not officially supporting the warrant article. Virginia further explained that Alison desires to do a full overhaul of the IZ Bylaw in the Fall when there is more time from staff to work on it. She also stated that a citizen may put forth a warrant article proposing changes the IZ Bylaw.

Roger then handed out sheets to members of the HAB so that they may sign up to be individual petitioners of the warrant article. All members present signed on to the Petition.

4. Town Meeting – Warrant Articles related to affordable housing:

a. Short-term rentals/Airbnb – Discussion of potential adverse impact on housing stock and rents

Roger said that he had placed this subject on the agenda following HAB members' expression of interest at the prior HAB meeting. He shared some information on concerns relating to this topic both locally and in terms of housing-related issues reported online in the U.S. and other countries. He expressed concerns that authorization of Airbnb/short term rentals in Brookline was converting valuable existing housing stock to a commercial transient use was reducing housing availability in Brookline while possibly increasing rents on the remaining rental housing stock.

Victor Panak, a Planner in the Department of Planning updated the HAB on work the Town has completed concerning regulations on short-term rentals/Airbnbs. Victor also talked about a warrant article to go before Town Meeting which outlines a possible bylaw. Roger noted that the Select Board had recently held a public meeting on short-term rentals and asked that the HAB provide their insight on how they could remove units from the Town's housing stock or increase housing costs.

Victor explained that the Town has working on this topic for over a year. The goal of the warrant article is to have rules and regulations in place should the Town allow short-term rentals. The bylaw would allow for three types of short-term rentals. They are as follows:

- Room-share unit (owner is the primary resident)
- Home-share unit (owner is the primary resident)
- Owner-adjacent unit (owner lives in one unit in a two-family house)

The bylaw would not allow professionally managed short-term rentals.

Victor noted that there is a limit of 90 days as a short-term rental for room-share units and 180 days for owner-adjacent units. He also stated that based on Boston's bylaw which does not allow professionally managed short-term rentals, news articles have said that the city expects more housing units to come back to the market.

HAB members continued discussion on the warrant article and how short-term rentals will affect housing in Brookline. HAB members did not provide official comments on the Town's Warrant Article.

b. Proposed Resolution relating to Brookline's share of regional housing production goals (Jeff Wachter – Brookline for Everyone)

Jeff Wachter, a member of Brookline for Everyone, presented to the HAB on a resolution to better support affordable housing development in Brookline. The resolution lays out the facts that Brookline has a lack of affordable housing and that the Town should have a goal of 7200 new affordable units by 2030. This number is based on an overall regional housing goal from the Metro Mayor's Coalition. He explained that this number was determined by looking at the overall regional goal of 185,000 new housing units and utilizing a percentage based on Brookline's population.

Jeff noted that his group's original Warrant Article proposal was a Zoning Bylaw amendment to eliminate all single-family zones and replace with small multifamily zones with minimum lot size of 5,000 sq. ft. and that,

prior to this HAB meeting, they had decided to substitute that Article with this Resolution as a first step to build support for such zoning reforms later on.

Virginia noted that there is no specific community goal for new units in the Metro Mayor's Coalition since each community is different and that there are other ways to determine an appropriate number.

Mr. Wachter understood this statement but stated that Brookline is more transit-accessible than other municipalities and provides easier access to job centers, making Brookline an appropriate place for new housing construction.

Virginia also explained that a better number to use to determine the current number of new housing units being developed in Brookline would be to use projects which have "received building permits" in place of "permitted" projects. This would recognize a significant number of units in 40B projects in various stages of development.

The HAB continued discussion on the resolution. Some members, while supporting the idea of seeking specific housing production goals, including zoning changes, said that the 7,200 figure might be too aspirational. They requested that Mr. Wachter provide the HAB with further analysis on the topic.

5. Update on March 29th Affordable Housing Forum and other community initiatives on affordable housing

Jennifer Raitt stated that a forum is planned which will provide citizens and others an opportunity to hear about the affordable housing problem in Brookline. Climate change and economic development will also be discussed and Deb Brown, a Town Meeting Member, will also provide a presentation on the Town's general affordable housing issues. The meeting is planned for March 29th.

Virginia talked to the HAB about an upcoming event to be held in the Select Board hearing room on March 2nd which will feature presentations by multiple Town boards on the work they do and a discussion on how the boards and committees can better work together. This dinner was arranged by Ken Lewis. Roger and Virginia will present for the HAB and Housing Division respectively at this event.

Roger stated that the Kent/Station Street Senior Affordable Housing project is moving forward. Currently, the committee is exploring how much each project will cost and has attained a consultant to analyze the developer's financials. The next meeting is scheduled for March 5th.

Virginia discussed current Chapter 40B and Inclusionary Zoning projects in the Town. She also stated that the Housing Trust is projected to receive \$726,000 from Free Cash from the Town. She also reported that a Warrant Article will be presented to Town Meeting to vote on a 1% annual surtax under the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which if passed would generate significant new revenues for the Housing Trust Fund.

6. Warrant articles related to affordable housing at Newbury/Welltower – update

Bill Madsen Hardy recused himself from discussion due to his organization, New Atlantic Ventures, working with Welltower on the Holland Rd. redevelopment site.

Roger stated that the Holland Rd. site will need a zoning upgrade to allow eighteen new affordable condominium units which will require a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting. He explained that the Holland Rd. site is the preferred option for the overall development to meet the regulations of the Town's IZ Bylaw. If the Holland Rd. site fails at Town Meeting, the alternative will be that \$6.5 million from will be transferred from

Welltower into a specially earmarked Trust Fund Account for the express purpose of funding the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) development of new affordable senior housing units at the site of the Colonel Floyd apartments property on Marion Street near Coolidge Corner..

Roger further explained possible changes to Holland Road option including the possible redevelopment and addition to the current historic mansion on the property in lieu of demolishing that building and replacing with all new construction

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22PM