

Meeting Minutes for the fifth meeting of the Land Bank Study Committee

3.25.19 6:00 PM Room 408 of Town Hall

Present: David Lescohier, Harold Petersen, Bob Lepson, Joanne Sullivan, Heather Hamilton, Chair

The chair opened the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Since there were a few missing members of the committee, the Chair held approval of the meeting minutes from 2.27.19.

Harold gave a brief recap of the discussion generated by his analysis and report from the last meeting.

The Chair gave a recap of a conversation she had as a result of trying to invite a guest speaker to the meeting. She had reached out originally to Sean Cronin, former Deputy Town Administrator. He suggested that Jay Gonzelez, former Town Meeting Member and former Democratic nominee for Governor last year, might be better since he had worked on the CPA initiatives.

The Chair met with Jay Gonzalez on March 11th. He described why he thought the CPA initiatives lost both times it came before the voters. Much discussion was had around what the CPA is like now that Boston is one of the members and the match is a lot lower than it had been in the past. When asked whether it would be possible to broaden the scope of the reasons to purchase land (for schools for instance), he said there is precedent for changes to the CPA. He suggested we contact the Community Preservation Coalition and ask them what they think. He also suggested that if we end up recommending a transfer tax, we need to meet with our delegation (Creem, Coppinger, Vitolo, Moran, and Elugardo). If they are all on board, it will be easier to get home rule petition.

David Lescohier provided a recap of conversation and outreach he has done with Representative Mike Connolly in Cambridge. His bills focus more on affordable housing and are H23/H24. Close to 30 other communities have signed on as co-sponsor. It attempts to split the burden by applying a 1% tax on the buyer and a 1% tax on the seller. There is an exemption for residents and vulnerable seniors. The taxes generated go into the Housing Trust Fund. It doesn't currently have the \$500,000 residential exemption, so rental condos would be the hardest hit under this proposal.

There was a question of what it would take to calculate how much money would be generated through this proposal. Harold described the data one would need in order to compute that calculation: all real estate sales information for the calendar year of 2018 in Brookline and which of those purchasers filed for residential exemptions. This could be done by the Tax Assessors Office, but it is quite burdensome and the results might not be that valuable.

There was a question of whether Mike Connolly would be willing to expand the scope of the reasons to use the trust fund dollars beyond affordable housing. David Lescohier said he would ask since he has reached out to meet with the Representative in the next few weeks.

There was a comment that the Real Estate lobby would be the biggest hurdle to this type of policy. They would prefer the CPA to a transfer tax (given the Cape Cod example). A suggestion was made to invite a real estate agent or professional in to give their analysis of the pros and cons.

There was a suggestion made to invite our newly elected State Representative, Tommy Vitolo, since many of these initiatives are at the state house level.

Next steps discussed include:

- 1) We need to outline what our options are (CPA, transfer tax, sign on to a bill before the state legislature, broaden the scope of a current bill)
- 2) We need to start to generate a strategy after we vet all of these options
- 3) Identify remaining potential guests to invite to future meetings

Meeting adjourned at 7:01 PM.

Potential guest speaker for an upcoming meeting: Community Preservation Coalition, Executive Director Sagamore

Our next meeting will be determined through a Doodle pool sometime in April.