



# Town of Brookline Massachusetts

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## PLANNING BOARD

Steve Heikin, Chair  
Mark J. Zarrillo, Clerk  
Andrea Brue  
Shelly Chipimo  
Linda K. Hamlin  
Blair Hines

## BROOKLINE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES By Zoom Event May 10, 2023 – 8:30 a.m.

**Board Present:** Steve Heikin, Shelly Chipimo, Mark Zarrillo, Andrea Brue, Linda Hamlin, Blair Hines  
**Staff Present:** Polly Selkoe, Beccah Mapure, Joe Viola

Steve Heikin opened the meeting.

### 1) PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Steve Heikin shared updates about MBTACA compliance in other communities in the area.

Polly Selkoe reported that the Advisory Committee recommended favorable action on WA 16.

### 2) HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

Joe Viola, Assistant Director for Community Planning, provided an overview of the HPP process.

Consultant Judi Barrett presented the HPP.

Andrea Brue asked which recommendations would help make housing more affordable.

Judi Barrett answered the HPP recommends looking into current inclusionary zoning policies and analyzing whether they should be adjusted. Additional examples from neighboring communities could be provided. Another recommendation was continuing to use Chapter 40B.

Andrea Brue asked about recommendations for keeping current affordable housing from expiring.

Judi Barrett replied that if a project was permitted under a 40B in the last 20 years at least 25% of the units would be kept affordable per the comprehensive permit.

Steve Heikin shared that the Housing Trust Fund had put funds into for-profit developments in the past to maintain affordability. Heikin then asked about examples in Brookline suitable for density increases near transit but not directly on corridors. Cypress Street and Station Street were mentioned as examples.

Steve Heikin wondered if it would be problematic to submit the site-specific studies to the State as part of the main body of the HPP. Judi Barrett clarified that there will be no problem to include the illustrations.

Blair asked how to incentivize or require smaller units with 400-600 sf. Blair Hines said that despite the reduction/elimination of parking requirements developers argued that there was still a high cost of providing infrastructure for more units.

Judi Barrett said there was an opportunity to provide density incentives for smaller units and encourage SROs. The HAB could have a program to encourage that kind of development using CDBG funds. Regulations could also be carefully worded to avoid violating the Fair Housing Act.

Linda Hamlin mentioned that the measures to encourage accessory dwelling units failed and believed that was due to the requirement to have the unit incorporated into the main house. The community didn't like the idea of ground-floor residential arguing it would take away commercial uses.

Steve Heikin said that the HAB was working on loosening the by-law on accessory dwelling units. Heikin said he has been pushing to allow an additional unit in T and F districts. Although allowing an additional unit would not have a major impact on affordability, a third unit of modest size added to two existing ones would be preferable to the demolition of existing two-family structures and replacement by two large high-end condos maxing out the available 1.0 FAR.

Judi Barrett said reaching ten percent was not the issue; the focus should be on creating a variety of housing opportunities beyond 40Bs.

Blair Hines believed that building large expensive units was financial discrimination.

Steve Heikin mentioned that the Town was considering creating an Affordable Housing Overlay District.

#### Public Comments

Betsy DeWitt said that counting the non-affordable units along with the affordable ones on every 40B project was misleading. She asked how affordable units are provided in the current market.

Judi Barrett replied that Towns rely on the inclusionary zoning ordinance to require affordable units in eligible projects.

Joe Viola added that there are town assets that could be repositioned for housing. Olmsted Hill was an example of a town project in partnership with a private developer, with units at different AMI.

Betsy DeWitt said projects involving demolitions could be required to provide affordable units.

David Rockwell, a former resident of Brookline and currently a member of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization which tracks a number of housing justice issues statewide, was happy that the HPP recognized the poor condition of public housing in the Town. This housing is at risk of being lost if there isn't better investment.

Board Discussion and Vote

Andrea Brue asked what would be the next step after the plan gets approved.

Steve Heikin said that similar to the previous HPP the next step would be to implement the recommendations and other ongoing strategies like the MBTACA, which could help boost implementation.

Blair Hines suggested adding a recommendation to find means to encourage smaller units.

**Steve Heikin made a motion to approve the Housing Production Plan including a recommendation that the Town find ways to encourage or incentivize the production of smaller affordable units. Andrea Brue seconded. The Planning Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.**

**The meeting was adjourned.**