

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

May 27, 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

(As approved at HAB meeting of July 21, 2020)

Members: Roger Blood, Steve Heikin, Michael Jacobs, Jennifer Raitt, Rita McNally, Jonathan Klein

Staff: Virginia Bullock, Edward Bates, David Guzman, Joseph Viola

Guests: Patrick Dober, Executive Director, Brookline Housing Authority

Attendees: Henry Winkelman, David Lescohier, Connor Clark, Amanda Zimmerman, Bob Miller

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

1. Approval of minutes from February 25, 2020 and April 1, 2020 HAB meetings

HAB members **VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 25, 2020 meeting

HAB members **VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes from the April 1, 2020 meeting with revisions.

2. EDAB letter to Select Board: HAB review, possible vote

Jonathan Klein stated that the Economic Development Advisory Board had drafted a letter to the Select Board asking that the Town take steps to better support an economic development agenda. The letter includes a number of recommended steps the Town and members of the Select Board can take to do this. It was written in response to the economic development forum held months ago. Steve Heikin added that this letter also asks that the Select Board push the Town's Planning Department to more fully engage in zoning modifications to better support economic development in Brookline.

Jonathan Klein **MOVED** and Jennifer Raitt **SECONDED**

VOTED: That the Housing Advisory Board send a letter to the Select Board referring to, and endorsing, the Economic Development Advisory Board's letter dated April 17, 2020

Five members voted in favor of this motion and Rita McNally voted against it.

The motion passed five to one.

3. Status of Emergency Rental Assistance funding for the Brookline Safety Net

Virginia updated members on the HAB's appropriation of \$100,000 to the Brookline Safety Net to support housing-related needs. She stated that the contract has been implemented and they've already pulled down their first requisition. In addition to the HAB's contribution, the Brookline Safety Net has also raised \$465,000 in private funding, \$75,000 in reallocated CDBG funds, and \$300,000 from the CDBG Cares Act. During the first quarter, there were 138 requests and over 200 requests so far in the second quarter. 80% of these requests have been housing-related and at this rate, the outlook is that the total amount of funds will be utilized.

4. Update on Affordable Housing Forum June 14th

Jennifer explained to HAB members that the Building a Better Brookline forum is being held on June 14th from 1 – 3PM virtually. The forum has a number of speakers and there is current talk to host a second and third forum. Jonathan also spoke on the forum and asked members to spread the word for people to attend.

5. Review of Affordable Housing Resources

Virginia updated HAB members of the amount of funds the Town has available to support affordable housing. She added that originally, there was \$727,000 in the Town's free cash fund to support the housing trust but with the Town's anticipated budget shortfall due to Covid-19, there will be no free cash this year.

6. Newbury College Redevelopment/Affordable Housing

Roger stated that the Newbury Advisory Subcommittee recently voted six to zero with one abstention to recommend that the inclusionary zoning housing requirements for the Newbury College redevelopment be for the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) option. This recommendation was also voted in favor for by the larger Newbury Committee. The Select Board also held a joint public hearing with the Planning Board and the Select Board voted separately with three to two in favor the BHA option while the Planning Board voted four to zero in favor of the Holland Road option. Roger further explained that the remaining public process on the proposed redevelopment of the Newbury College site will culminate at Town Meeting in June.

7. Warrant Article 20 – Authorizing increased Inclusionary zoning fees (postponed) correction needed

Roger explained that Steve has caught an error in the proposed Warrant Article 20. In paragraph 5A, the number 6 needs to be replaced by the number 4. The HAB held further discussion on this article and the talked about the needed process for its implementation.

Roger Blood MOVED and Rita McNally SECONDED

VOTED: A motion that the HAB approve the amendment to Warrant Article 20 so that the warrant can be changed before it goes through further public process and approve it with the intent of making a recommendation to the Planning Board for its consideration.

All HAB members voted in favor of the motion.

8. Public Hearing on Warrant Articles 18 and 19

- **Warrant Article 18 – Acceptance of legislation to establish Affordable Housing Trust Fund**
- **Warrant Article 19 – Amend Article 3.13 of the Town's General Bylaws**

Roger stated that these two Warrant Articles were proposed by both the Planning Department and the Town Counsel. Roger first explained that Warrant Article 18 would adopt M.G.L Chapter 44 section 55c which is the state's template for affordable housing trusts. Brookline's housing trust goes back many years before the state adopted this legislation in 2005. Roger further stated that adopting this legislation is timely in that the Town may vote to approve the Community Preservation Act and in that situation the housing trust would be eligible to receive a substantial additional funding.

Roger also talked about Warrant Article 19 and explained that this article is a required companion to Warrant Article 18 because in order to be fully aligned with the state statute, there must be a few changes

to the Town's bylaw. He explained a few examples such as HAB member's terms would be two years instead of three and the HAB will need to have a Select Board person as an additional member.

David Lescohier, a member of the public, spoke about the warrant articles and encouraged the HAB to vote in favor of them.

Jennifer Raitt MOVED and Steve Heikin SECONDED

VOTED: To recommend favorable action on Warrant Article 18 authorization to accept M.G.L. Chapter 44 section 55c affordable housing trust and to also recommend favorable action on Warrant Article 19 to ask the Town to amend Article 3.13 of the Town's general bylaws, Housing Advisory Board, and to become the Town of Brookline Housing Trust

All HAB members voted in favor of the motion.

9. Updates – BHA RAD projects at 61 Park Street and 90 Longwood Ave.

Roger invited Patrick Dober, Executive Director of the Brookline Housing Authority, to provide the HAB an update on the 61 Park Street and 90 Longwood Ave. projects. Patrick first explained examples of steps the BHA has taken due to Covid-19.

He then stated that the 61 Park Street project has been halted at the moment due to Covid-19 and predicts the Town's Building Department should approve the project's Health and Safety Plan soon after which construction can begin again.

Patrick also spoke about the 90 Longwood Ave. project. He explained that there should be a closing in July or August. He's confident that if the Health and Safety Plan is approved for 61 Park Street, that the plan should also be approved for the 90 Longwood project.

The HAB further discussed the BHA's projects and asked questions.

10. Affordable senior housing project at 370 Harvard Street (2Life) – 700 applications – on schedule for August 2020 completion

Virginia stated that construction has not been halted at the 370 Harvard Street project at this time. There was one case of Covid-19 by one construction worker and at that time, the work on the project was stopped for a brief period. She also provided the HAB with an update on the number of people who have applied for units at the project and described the racial breakdown of applicants. 2Life is hopeful to have residents move into the project by the fall.

11. Kent-Station Street senior housing responses to RFP – current status

Roger said that the Kent-Station Street Committee completed its work on recommending a developer for the site and will report their decision and recommendation to the Select Board and the public as soon as the Select Board can place it on its agenda.

12. Two affordable units for resale: 24 Juniper St. #71 (one bedroom unit) and 1600 Beacon St. #307 (one bedroom unit)

David Guzman from the Planning Department provided the HAB with an update on the resales at 24 Juniper Street #71 and 1600 Beacon Street #307. He stated that for both properties there have currently been a total of fifteen applicants.

13. Other New Business - Housing Choice Bill letter

Jonathan presented a letter to HAB members from Brookline for Everyone which endorses Governor Baker's Housing Choice Bill. He explained that the main point of this bill is that it will reduce the threshold for zoning changes from a 2/3 majority to a simple majority. He stated that this would provide more flexibility and a powerful tool for zoning changes and to also help create more affordable housing in Brookline.

Jonathan Klein MOVED and Jennifer Raitt SECONDED

VOTED: That the Housing Advisory Board endorse and agree to sign the letter supporting the Housing Choice Bill with corrections noted in order to make the letter accurate.

Five members voted in favor of this motion and Rita McNally voted against it. The motion passed five to one.

14. Other New Business – Discussion on Local Preference

Roger brought up the topic of local preference to HAB members. He asked HAB members to review the current policies to explore whether the 70% local preference is deterring racial diversity in Brookline. He explained that there are three basic choices:

- Do nothing
- Reduce the 70% local preference threshold
- Eliminate local preference

Virginia further discussed that the Town has a policy that up to 70% of applicants receive local preference if they live, work, or have children in the Brookline public schools. She also noted that local preference is utilized for initial lotteries and Chapter 40B projects. She then explained that at recent Select Board meetings, there's been discussion on how to raise racial diversity of affordable home ownership units.

Jennifer recommended that the HAB needs a more thorough analysis on the impact of local preference. She is generally not a fan of local preference, but finds that there is also some validity in it, as well. She further stated that 70% is too high. Steve Heikin added that the HAB should explore the effects of different percentages for local preference such as if the number is lowered to 50%.

HAB members further discussed local preference and Planning staff stated that they would provide data for a future discussion.

15. Other New Business – Brookline Housing Goals

Roger stated that the HAB should discuss the goals and approaches the Town can take to promote affordable housing production in Brookline now that the Town has reached 10% affordable housing.

Jonathan noted that the HAB should undertake a warrant article at a future meeting to propose specific housing goals over the next ten years. Roger recommended that the HAB should be initiating some type of process to update the Town's Housing Production Plan.

Jennifer explained that the discussion on updating the Housing Production Plan should take place soon. Virginia also recommended waiting until the new Census data comes out.

HAB members further discussed this topic and will talk about it at future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30PM