

Meeting Minutes, June 5, 7:30-9:00 PM (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Jonathan Klein (chair), Kimberley Richardson, Amy Schectman, Alice MacGarvie Thompson (minutes), Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Teronda Ellis

Committee Members Absent: Rita McNally (who had trouble with the phone connection), Steve Heikin (who was out of town)

Staff Present: Jessica Jean-Louis, Community Engagement Assistant

1. Call to Order, Public Comment, Minutes -- Jonathan called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. The minutes were approved, with the correction that Kimberley's name had been misspelled, and was corrected. He asked if there was any public comment, and, with 5 individuals as "Participants," none asked to comment.

2. The Cambridge Experience (presentation and discussion with Becca Schofield, Co-Chair of A Better Cambridge, the chief proponent of the Cambridge AHOD)

- Also developer, worked for Homeowners Rehab in Cambridge
- Now works for Pennrose
- She's going to give us a presentation about the Cambridge experience
 - Both political and technical details of ordinance

Becca then posed her slide, [which you can find linked HERE.](#)

Becca's PRESENTATION BEGINS

- Zoning in Cambridge= really complex
- AHOD needed to be CITY wide, not just one district
- Looked at zoning requirements- FAR requirements, parking, etc across town
- Map of WHERE affordable housing is= powerful tool
 - This is because of zoning
- Goals of AHOD
 - Help affordable housing providers purchase sites
 - Less competition, cheaper construction, faster permitting
 - More equitable distribution of affordable units
 - Better access to resources
 - Prevent displacement- big issue
 - Density= climate action
- AHOD hasn't been super effective with acquisition of new sites
 - Because market changes
 - A couple of good cases
 - BUT most of what we've seen is redevelopment of properties they already own
 - Which is good and all but it doesn't solve the buying new properties on the market
- Affordable housing providers were getting priced out- looking at a bunch of sites and wanting to get them, but much smaller number purchased
- Key features
 - 100% affordable is REALLY important!
 - People don't want more luxury housing
 - 100% below AMI

- the AMI is so high that this works for developers
 - Super flexible for developers- not a lot of unit max or mins, that makes it way easier for developers
 - City-wide, no where is excluded
 - No parking minimums- developers will still build parking, but it should be up to them for flexibility
 - Provision for shuttle services that worked really well
 - Getting rid of max FAR in some places has really worked
 - Opportunities
 - Infill on AH developer lands
 - Reuse of historic buildings- pretty old building reused and not teared down
 - Effective in areas with less abutters
 - Build on city owned lots of other properties that are well located (like near the T and bus)
- Timeline
 - 2016- idea
 - 2018- group gets together
 - 2019- ABC makes a proposal
 - 2019- shows to lots of public meetings
 - Didn't pass leading up to 2019 election
 - Made it a big issue for the next city council
 - 2020- Got majority of city councilors supporting it, it passed
 - AHO expansive initiative
 - Mostly infill development so far
 - Looking for new construction opportunities
 - Regular progress reports and assessments
- Actions
 - Public comment was important
 - Have a lot of examples
- Next steps
 - Open space requirement is tricky but important- if you have more open space you can build taller
 - AHO expansion

Questions

- Marion: is any of it geared towards low AMI requirements (like 30% AMI)
 - Becca: No. Flexibility for developers. But, all the developments have included low AMI.
- Jonathan: can we get an example
 - Becca: Miller's, POA Sacred Heart, the housing authority did some stuff, HRI, new street site (infill)
- Teronda: can you talk more about height margins that were raised- what was convo around that
 - Becca: We didn't ask for enough! We should have asked for higher- that's what AHOD expansion is about
- Amy: How did historic districts impact it
 - Becca: historic districts mostly white homeowners who are anti-affordable housing on a neighborhood conservation district council
 - Still a limiting factor

- Jonathan: i feel like there'd be resistance in single family neighborhoods here- what was that like for you
 - Becca: never a discussion about excluding single family neighborhoods!
 - They would just listen to public comment, write it down, then do mythbusting- really effective!
 - Would say "myth: this" and then "fact: this" refute the claims
 - "AHO misinformation"
- Jonathan: as of right is a myth because of detailed design review. Not mandatory but there's an extensive community process. Can you say more
 - Becca: we weren't sure that was gonna work. Same developers doing affordable housing again really helps because if you mess up you won't get another project
- Brian Ladd (from participants): how important is 100% vs lower percentage
 - Becca: super important! People hate zoning relief for luxury housing. Pushes people to commit to it
- Alice: how do we write our proposal in a way we can get more acquisition of new properties instead of just infill
 - Becca: more density. Sorry we didn't go higher. When you have more units, you can really spread costs out and make your project more competitive. City gets behind bigger projects easier. Density is really important for this!!
- Teronda: looking back would you have liked to see additional language that pertains to guidelines and structures that support affordable housing so that you could move more nimbly (like with design review)
 - Becca: we tried to not change it because this was a city written policy- they were proprietary about design review- didn't want to interfere- very cambridge specific
- Jonathan: Talk about parking requirements?
 - Becca: cambridge eliminated all of them- used to be 1:1 in a lot of areas
- Marion: What about 24 hour street parking? We don't have that at all. To compare them is ridiculous. Also, have you been able to develop in West Cambridge because there's no public transit. Similar to Brookline, area we haven't built has no public transit
 - Becca: finch project. Bus routes are really important. They set up a regular shuttle as part of the transit management authority- that was how people got to the T- shuttles really work!! Also you'll still have parking

The rest

- Amy: no more DHCD. Now it's EOHLC- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities
- Becca says I'm here any time and would love to talk more. It was hard but it totally worked!

3. Scheduling. Jonathan: I have to cancel June 26 since I'm babysitting out of town that week. Does July 17th for our next meeting work? We can move into specifics there. Also we'll know more about MBTA-CA. **Everyone agreed that the next meeting will be on July 17 at 7:30-9:00.** We had previously agreed to skip an August meeting.

4. Adjournment. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at about 8:40 pm.