

**Winchester Housing Partnership Board**  
**Minutes for the April 12, 2023 Remote Meeting**

Present: Chair John Suhrbier, Vice-Chair Allan Rodgers, Cathy Boyle, David Miller, Diab Jerius, Lisa Matrundola, Michael Bettencourt, Michelle Bergstrom, Philip Bushey, and Felicity Tuttle as Clerk Pro Tem.

Absent: Marty Jones, Naomi DeLairre, Steve Campbell

A quorum being present, the Chair convened the meeting at 7:35 PM. This special meeting was convened to review a draft memorandum from the Housing Partnership Board to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) commenting on the waivers requested by Mario Covino for the nine units of rental housing Mr. Covino is proposing for 87-89 Cross Street to replace the existing two-family house. The project is a “Friendly” Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit filed under the provisions of the Local Initiative Program of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Board members discussed the town’s policy for handling “Friendly” Chapter 40B applications, the list of requested waivers, provided comments on the draft memorandum, suggested changes to the existing draft, and voted on the final version to be submitted responding to these comments and suggestions. The ZBA is scheduled to begin their public hearing on April 20, 2023.

Following the March 16 meeting of the Housing Partnership Board, the Chair obtained a copy of the town’s policy for handling “Friendly” Chapter 40B LIP applications, and discussed the history and background of this policy with former Town Planner Brian Szekely. The policy was prepared, at the request of the Select Board, by Brian Szekely to support on-going discussions between the town and Bryan Melanson for the redevelopment of the abandoned commercial properties located at the intersection of Washington and Swanton Streets. Brian Szekely reported that this work was started as far back as 2017 and 2019, and that it had been approved twice by the Select Board with the second approval being in 2021.

In summary, all of the Board members present were surprised by the breadth and extent of the waivers requested by the developer. While members continue to support the approval and construction of the proposed project, they felt that the waivers, as currently requested, should not be approved by the ZBA. Given that a “Friendly” Chapter 40B is to be developed on a cooperative basis between the developer and a community, members were disappointed that the list of requested waivers had not been discussed with the Select Board, the Housing Partnership Board, the Planning Board or other town boards prior to the formal filing of the application for the Comprehensive Permit.

The draft memorandum identifies seven waivers that are of particular concern to the Housing Partnership Board, and recommends that the applicant and the ZBA

consult with the full range of applicable town boards in considering the waivers that have been requested. The overall recommendation, though, is to adhere to the previously considered and adopted town policy for this type of project.

Much of the meeting discussion concerned the public availability of a financial pro forma, the requested waiver of permit fees, and the analysis of traffic, parking, and pedestrian issues.

Chapter 40B requires that the conditions imposed with an approval not be so extensive that the conditions would render the project financially infeasible. The majority of the discussion, as a result, focused on the public availability of the “financial pro forma” for the proposed project. Board members felt that determining the need for any of the waivers being requested was opaque in the absence of the pro forma being shared with the ZBA and other town boards. Housing Partnership Board members felt strongly that a financial pro forma should be provided by the developer and made available as a public document, consistent with what has been done on other Winchester 40B’s. This information then is available for use in making decisions on the waivers that have been requested and in deciding on any conditions to be imposed.

The Board was very pleased with the full content of the draft memorandum. Thus with two typographical errors to be corrected, one sentence clarified, and other changes to respond to the comments and suggestions made during the meeting, Allan Rodgers moved that the Board vote to approve the draft as amended and that the Chair send the memorandum to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Michelle Bergstrom seconded the motion. By roll call, all members present voted in favor; none abstained; and none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Felicity Tuttle*

Felicity Tuttle, Clerk Pro Tem