

**Winchester Housing Partnership Board
Minutes for the Meeting on June 15, 2022**

Present: Chair John Suhrbier, Allan Rodgers, David Miller (Conservation Committee), Diab Jerius (Planning Board), Jifeng Liu, Lisa Matrundola (Disabilities Access Commission), Marty Jones, Michelle Bergstrom (School Committee), Michael Bettencourt (Select Board), and Felicity Tuttle as Clerk Pro Tem.

Absent: Cathy Camp Boyle (Housing Authority), Naomi DeLairre, Council on Aging (Vacant)

Guests: Susan Verdicchio

NEXT MEETING DATE: Not scheduled; practice is not to meet during the summer

MINUTES: The minutes for the meeting of May 11, 2022, were approved unanimously. Two people who missed the meeting abstained.

1) **WATERFIELD SPECIAL TOWN MEETING: John Suhrbier**

The results of the June 6 Special Town Meeting were summarized. Kris Galletta, a member of Winchester's Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, introduced the Trust and walked Town Meeting attendees through the 30 year financial pro forma. The Finance Committee was given better preparation than a year ago and as a result now has a clearer understanding of affordable housing parameters. Tom Howley, on behalf of the Council on Aging, gave an excellent presentation in favor of the revised Land Development Agreement. A Winchester High School student, on behalf of the recently formed Students for Affordable Housing, spoke effectively. The memorandum prepared by Winchester Town Staff was very good and helped give background and reasoning for the new proposed land agreement with CIVICO. Because this was a contract with the Town, a two-thirds majority vote was necessary rather than a simple majority. The vote was 119 in favor, 47 opposed, and 1 abstention; corresponding to 72% for and 28% against. Town Charter states that there is a 5 day window to appeal, which time frame has already passed.

2) **WASHINGTON AND SWANTON STREET LAND: Michael Bettencourt**

Michael Bettencourt explained that the Request For Proposals (RFP) now has been issued, with a deadline of August 1st for replies. So far there has been interest and a number of questions, all of which are going to Town Planner Brian Szekely. The Select Board is hopeful that they will be able to make a recommendation to Fall Town Meeting. After the August 1 due date, there will be a review of the submitted proposals by community stakeholders including MAHT, WHPB, PB, and DAC. There then will be a public meeting planned where qualified applicants will be interviewed.

3) **CAMBRIDGE ST. AND RIVER ST. DEVELOPMENTS: John Suhrbier**

Essentially identical Local Preference applications were submitted to MassHousing for both of these projects, with a 70% local preference approved for Cambridge Street but only a 42% local preference approved for River Street. The same rationale was described in each submission, but they were reviewed by two different people. Both the developer, SEB, and John are puzzled why the two local preference requests sent within weeks of each other would receive different approval percentages, although the actual number of units having a local preference are similar for the two projects. The current thinking is not to appeal MassHousing's decision.

4) **WINCHESTER MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST: Marty Jones**

There are now seven people on the MAHT as Trustees. Marty said that they have begun talking

about what the Trust can do to help meet affordable housing needs in town. Towards this end, the MAHT recently met with John Suhrbier from the Housing Partnership Board; Susan Cashall, Executive Director of the Winchester Housing Authority; and Zeina Marchant from the Winchester's Affordable Housing Coalition. After the commitment of funds to the Waterfield-CIVICO development, there is about \$500,000 in remaining MAHT funds which could be used in various ways. Are there other sources of revenue which could amplify this \$500K? For example, \$150K in state funding that Representative Michael Day worked on obtaining for the bond anticipated for the Washington and Swanton land. What can we do to keep these issues on the front burner?

5) **PLANNING BOARD'S NORTH MAIN STREET INITIATIVE: Diab Jerius**

Diab Jerius reported that on June 14, the Planning Board held a public visioning forum for the North Main Street corridor that runs from Lake Street to the Woburn line. Topics discussed included infrastructure and creating a more used friendly neighborhood rather than simply a "drive thru" to get elsewhere. This North Main Street area is the second largest commercial district in town. The housing is more dense toward downtown and then there is more lower density residential housing in the Clark Street area. With the new state law and associated guidelines that towns served by public transportation have more multi-family housing within a half mile of an MBTA commuter station, which for Winchester will desirably include the North Main Street Corridor served by the Route 134 bus. Important considerations include what density does the neighborhood and the Town want, how many housing units per acre, how much parking should be provided, and what should be allowed by right. The issue of possible flooding along North Main Street toward Woburn has not yet been discussed. This North Main Street work is being supported by the consultant firm FORM + PLACE, a municipal urban planning group from Newton who have been very responsive and progressive.

6) **PLANNING BOARD'S HOLTON STREET INITIATIVE: Diab Jerius**

A Phase 1 public forum is planned for June 28 for the Holton Street area of Town to look at existing conditions and what might be done in the future. The work will study the uses now in the area, how they have changed over time, and how they could change further. There is not much commercial development remaining in town, so one possibility is to add more commercial development since this would help the tax base. Mixed use development also is possible. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC] is doing the study of initial conditions, as they did an excellent job on the similar analysis conducted for North Main Street.

7) **ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT WORKING GROUP UPDATE: Diab Jerius**

Since the May 25th public zoom meeting, the ADU Working Group has continued to meet every two weeks. The current focus is to get more information out to the public. This includes a table at the Farmer's Market as often as we can, and creating flyers for people to take away. Phillip Beltz, Director of the Council on Aging, is planning a Housing Symposium this fall reviving Winchester's goal of being an "Age Friendly Community" per AARP. In the 1980's, there was a lot of opposition in Winchester to ADUs. At that time, the COA did a survey and found that seniors were not excited about the concept. Members of the ADU Working Group believe there has been a considerable change in attitude, as demonstrated by the recent popularity of ADU's in a number of other municipalities. For example, Arlington encountered a good deal of opposition several years ago and their initial zoning proposal was voted down. Through a grassroots group explaining the advantages of ADU's, Arlington recently passed a very flexible ADU zoning provision, but they have not had the expected "avalanche" of requested permits.

8) **MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL HOUSING INSTITUTE ZOOM: John Suhrbier**

Our Town Planner Brian Szekely and our Chair attended by Zoom this year's two day workshops presented by the Mass. Housing Partnership (MHP). Interesting topics included:

a) Housing and Climate Change and the focus on sustainability.

b) Housing and Health, with the focus on mental and physical health and the significant benefits to elders being able to age within the community they have been living in for the last 40 or 50 years. This enables them to continue to connect with local friends, people of different ages, and to access their services. Among the topics discussed were ADUs and rental opportunities.

c) Housing issues are becoming more polarized. Nick Kelsey from Rhode Island pointed out how much more polarized housing discussions are now than a few years ago, how much more difficult it is now and often almost impossible to create a real dialogue in public hearings, and how organizers outside of a specific project area now are getting involved. He gave one example of how Newton has two organized groups, one in favor and one against. Kelsey felt that engaging people long term is crucial. However, a challenge is how do you get people consistently involved given the collapse of local newspapers and online groups tend to be much more narrow in terms of being either for and against rather than balanced.

d) The concept of "community character" now is involved in almost every housing debate with the "historic village" viewpoint, as often alluded to in Winchester conversations, basically being coded language for opposing any change which would include more affordable housing. Brian Szekely recently forwarded a NIMBY article to all of us.

9) **WINCHESTER UPDATED SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY (SHI): John Suhrbier**

Brian Szekely with the help of several others recently updated Winchester's Subsidized Housing Inventory, adding Cambridge Street, River Street, and multiple smaller developments. The result is that, based on the 2010 Census, we are now at 5.0% towards meeting the 10% affordable housing target. Using the results of the 2020 Census, this number is reduced slightly to 4.9%. This represents a huge stride forward from the historical 1% and the recent 3.7%.

10) **UPDATE ON 87-89 CROSS STREET: John Suhrbier**

It does not appear that much has happened since Mario Covino, John Suhrbier, and Brian Szekely met with the Select Board on May 5. The next steps are for the developer to meet with DHCD, and then to prepare a preliminary application.

11) **THE NEW MBTA ZONING REQUIREMENTS: John Suhrbier**

Approximately 400 cities, towns, agencies, and individuals submitted comments to DHCD concerning their draft proposed guidelines to locate increased multi-family housing within a half mile of a location served by the MBTA. While positive comments were received, some communities strongly dissented with the proposed approach. DHCD has stated that they want "to get this right" and are working on revisions. The desire is to publish final guidance before the end of the summer.

The meeting adjourned at about 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Felicity Tuttle

Felicity Tuttle, Clerk pro Tem.