

## **Winchester Housing Partnership Board**

### **Minutes for Meeting of June 19, 2019**

Present were John Suhrbier, David Miller, Marty Jones, Lisa Matrundola, Michelle Bergstrom, Felicity Tuttle, Diab Jeruis, Michael Bettencourt and Allan Rodgers, who prepared these minutes.

Absent were Cathy Boyle, Laura Fitzgerald, Naomi DeLairre and Jerome Garciano.

The Board first reviewed the minutes of the past three meetings. It unanimously approved the minutes of the March and April meetings and unanimously approved the minutes of the May 15 Board meeting with attachments.

John Suhrbier led a discussion of the recently released report by Amy Dain analyzing the housing practices and policies of some 100 different Eastern Massachusetts communities. Although each community is different, she found the following more general patterns.

- There is little multi-family zoning. This ought to be a focus for change.
- The approval process is slow and should be streamlined.
- Town centers are the location for affordable housing in many communities, but these produce comparatively few affordable units. More attention should be given to the outer edge, where typically more units currently being be built.
- Residents need much more information and education about affordable housing.
- 18 communities have floating zones; a practice more communities should adopt.
- Strict limits on height, setbacks and density discourage multi-unit housing. These should be eased.
- Mixed use zoning should be allowed, but not required.
- She made no mention about the impact of affordable housing on school populations.

The Board then discussed what Winchester can do. Here are some suggestions.

- More incentives are needed to attract developers.
- Rezone to allow more than one affordable housing to replace a single family house that is being converted.
- The Town should use loan funds to encourage development, such as through the newly created Municipal Housing Trust.
- The town should hire an assistant Town Planner.
- We should be involved in Phase 3 of the Master Plan discussions, which will focus on specific strategies to be implemented in Winchester.
- We should encourage the creation of more affordable housing locations in the flats.
- Parking requirements should be reduced.
- More attention should be given to tear downs. Diab Jeruis showed a map of tear downs to date.

Diab Jeruis reported that the Planning Board is turning its attention to further North Main Street zoning changes and the preparation of design guidelines. It plans to hire a consultant to review economic issues and potential locations for more housing there.

John Suhrbier and others gave the following updates.

1. Winning Farm. Three buildings are scheduled to be finished by the end of August. The Massachusetts DHCD still has not accepted the developer's proposal for the location of the two affordable units. As an alternative, the developer has pledged to help the Town acquire another affordable unit at another location by contributing to the cost of development. Discussions led by the Town Manager will continue.
2. On 735 Main Street, John Suhrbier and Allan Rodgers have been discussing with the developer the possibility of an off-site affordable housing unit rather than one on-site unit. DHCD has strict criteria that must be satisfied for an off-site unit can qualify for the 40B inventory, which to date the developer has not agreed to. We have asked them to re-consider the possibility of an on-site unit. The next ZBA hearing is scheduled for July 22.
3. An informational meeting for the CVS site on Washington St. was held on May 20. A developer is proposing to build 52 condominium housing units as a friendly 40B, with 13 of the units being affordable. The reaction of the neighbors generally was favorable, A specific timetable for going forward on this proposal has not yet been established; this will be the focus over the summer.
4. On the Municipal Housing Trust, a working meeting was held this morning about how to move forward. Topics covered included a focus on a Board consisting of 7 persons, the preparation of draft bylaws, and the Town Manager's role.
5. On River Street, MassHousing has approved the developer's site plan application, with many of the town's comments included in the approval letter. The developer plans to file an application with the ZBA shortly. The ZBA will need consultant help to guide it through the process since all of its members are new to the 40B process.
6. On 416 Cambridge Street. the Land Court is expected to issue its decision soon on the appeal challenge to the ZBA's approval of the proposal.
7. There is a new developer, Ian Gillespie, for the Fells Hardware site and he currently is seeking a new architect.
8. On the Waterfield Parcel, there are no new developments to report except that Town Meeting authorized the Select Board to purchase a strip of land owned by the PanAm Railroad located along the right side of the site that currently is used to access the upper parking area. Control of this strip of land will expand possibilities for a development on the larger parcel. The Town Engineer's view is that work on the development of the Waterfield Parcel can proceed in parallel with the T's redevelopment of the train station as long as the two initiatives are coordinated.
9. John Suhrbier and Allan Rodgers met recently with newly elected Select Board member Amy Shapiro, with very positive and productive results. Ms. Shapiro brings to the Select Board skills in leadership development, including facilitating collaboration and communication.

The Board agreed not to meet during July and August unless necessary, and to schedule its next meeting for September 11 at 7:30 PM.