

WAYLAND HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Minutes – January 12, 2016

Submitted by Rachel G. Bratt

Unanimously approved March 15, 2016

Attending: Mary Antes, Kathy Boundy, Rachel Bratt, Chris Di Bona, Pat Harlan, Stephanie May, Armine Roat

Absent: Marty Nichols and Betty Salzberg

Also attending, Jennifer Steel, WHP representative to Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

At 7:50 Rachel called the meeting to order.

Rachel welcomed our new member, Rev. Dr. Stephanie May, representative from the Wayland Clergy Association. Stephanie briefly introduced herself and described her longstanding interest in housing issues. For the past 1½ years, she has been the minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church, First Parish in Wayland. Each member of the committee then provided a brief statement about her background.

Mary moved to approve the minutes of November 17, 2015, as corrected (two typos had been noted); Kathy seconded. Unanimously approved.

We completed the discussion, for the time being, about the problem raised at the last two meetings, about tax increases at the deed-restricted homeownership units being a problem for the lower income homeowners. Several members had also attended a meeting with Ellen Brideau, Town Assessor, in December. The “bottom line” of the various meetings/discussions seems to be that there is no easy way for the town to provide relief to these homeowners. Kathy noted that the state allows a “residential exemption,” which would be available to virtually everyone in town, since nearly all the homes are owner-occupied. This has not been adopted by Wayland. Jennifer noted that MA Chapter 61 provides tax relief for land used for agriculture, silviculture and open space/recreation. This, too, would not seem to be applicable. Members of our committee agreed that we not lose sight of this issue and that if it becomes a serious problem in the future, we will return to it. Rachel noted that she had not heard about other towns confronting this problem and that for Wayland to “do something,” it likely would mean a vote at Town Meeting, followed by a home rule petition presented to the legislature.

Habitat - The ribbon-cutting for the first two Habitat homes took place on Sat. Dec. 5. Mary’s role in making it all happen was highlighted. A big thank-you to Mary! The first two families will, hopefully, be moving in to their homes shortly. The second building should be ready by the summer, but given the likelihood of delays, that may be uncertain. One of the families in the second building has four children who are currently in the METCO program. Since the new Habitat family’s children will be town residents at the start of the 2016-17 school year, a question was raised about whether this would free up four spaces for other children to join the METCO program next fall. It seems to be an administrative issue.

Trust Fund- no funds for housing have been spent yet. The only money expended so far has been \$2,500 for an audit/legal fees related to setting up the Trust. The Trust Fund committee is working on goals.

River’s Edge – Following the disappointing result last month, of no developers responding to the RFP, the committee asked developers who had downloaded the RFP to provide information about why they did not submit proposals. Chris provided several reasons including: problems with the site (location between

Wayland and Sudbury landfills, need to spend money to demolish concrete structures, possible contamination of soil, and cost of getting access to water/sewage disposal). In addition, it is a time consuming and costly task for developers to submit an RFP, particularly given the level of detail requested by Wayland for this submission. A meeting with potential developers was held last week to discuss concerns and possible next steps. One question raised was the possibility of not requiring 25% of the units to be occupied by residents over 55 years old, since, according to Chris, that requirement, under state law, necessitates that these units be located separately from the non-age-restricted units. If, instead, the Town simply encourages the development of 25% age-restricted units, developers felt there would be no problem finding tenants in this age group. However, eliminating the over 55 requirement will require a new vote by Town Meeting and it is not planned for this to be done this spring. So, the process will take much longer than originally thought. Chris also noted that the Town will likely use a 2-stage application process in the future, so that developers can provide a development concept/plan in the first stage, but without a great deal of detail. Developers whose plans are of interest to the Town, would then be invited to submit a fuller, more detailed proposal.

The meeting of the combined housing groups took place on Thursday, Dec. 3. This was, in part, a follow-up to the joint meeting held in January 2015. Three housing working groups had been formed: The Visions group, chaired by Katherine Provost has completed a draft report. The major need is for rental housing with at least 2 bedrooms. Sarki's group on zoning still has not yet met. Brian's group on monitoring has met once, but Rachel has not heard from him. Rachel will contact him. Also, we have not heard that Sarki has completed the Housing Production Plan; Rachel will follow up with him as well. There was no further information about the discussion at the 12/3 meeting about how the Planning Board will deal with counting affordable units required in a Conservation Cluster. There were no other updates from that meeting.

Mary reported that Devens Hamlen, the developer of the Covered Bridge project had suggested that the Wayland Housing Authority purchase the 3 on-site units that he is building there. This would not change the "count" for the Subsidized Housing Inventory, since the 3 units are currently slated to be sold as deed-restricted homeownership units. But it would enable much lower income people to live there. However, it is not clear where the Housing Authority would get the funds to do this and, also, the Town would lose property tax revenue under that plan.

Jennifer asked whether there was a concrete map or strategy for where affordable housing could go and what the Town's priorities are for achieving its housing goals. Other than statements in the Housing Production Plan, and in the recently drafted by the Katherine Provost's Vision committee, a real blueprint does not exist. Jennifer feels that it would be beneficial to have this level of detail, and to get resident buy-in to the plan. Rachel suggested that Jennifer see if she can find information from other towns that have embarked on this type of process successfully and that we would discuss at our next meeting.

Rachel noted that she had gotten a letter from the Episcopal Archdiocese informing her that the Church of the Holy Spirit building and land would be sold to another church group and that it would continue to be used for religious purposes. Rachel had explored the possibility of the land being used for housing. Stephanie noted that Fred Moser, the prior priest at the Church of the Holy Spirit, has taken a new job at a church in northern New England.

Next meeting: Tuesday March 8, 7:45, 2016

At 9:20 Kathy made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Pat