

NORTHAMPTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Minutes

January 4, 2016

Members Present: Gordon Shaw, Chair; Peter Frothingham, Vice-Chair; Jim Reis, Richard Abuza, Michael Roy, Rev. Todd Weir, Alan Verson, Lynne Wallace. Also present, Joanne Campbell, Executive Director Valley CDC and Peg Keller, staff.

Call to Order: Chair Shaw called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Ms. Campbell was welcomed.

Valley Community Development Corporation Update

Lumberyard Project

Ms. Campbell gave an update on the redevelopment of the Northampton Lumberyard parcel located at 256 Pleasant Street. The proposed project is for a 5 story building that will accommodate 55 units of affordable housing and commercial space. 20% of the units will be available for households earning 30% or less of the area median income and 80% for those earning 60% or less of ami. There will be 5,000 sq. ft. of first floor commercial space, which will include office space for Valley CDC on the Holyoke St. side of the development.

Both the Central Business Architecture and Planning Board Site Plan permits had been appealed by abutters. The CBAC permit was upheld by the Planning Board and no further appeals were made. The Planning Board appeal was settled with the other abutter in late October. No trial was needed. The settlement will not affect the proposed design of the redevelopment. Applications for State funding are being submitted for the second time. The pre-application for the first (and probably only) round of 2016 went in in December. She expects to hear in early January if they will be invited to submit a full application. Funding announcements would be made in August/September. If the project receives funding, it would take 6-9 months to close, which would be around May of 2017; to be followed by 12 months of construction. Occupancy is projected for spring of 2018. Funding from Smith College and City MassWorks applications are needed to assist with the relocation of the storm-water conduit that traverses the parcel. Project architects are working on 25% drawings to get accurate cost estimates. If funding is not received in 2016, another year would be added to the time table.

Community Investment Tax Credit Program

Ms. Campbell then updated NHP members on Valley's participation in the CITC Program. The MA Association of CDC's put forth legislation that was adopted by the State to increase the local impact of CDC's. Valley just completed the first year (2014-15) of the program. They had been awarded \$100,000 for a \$200,000 credit and as of 12/31/15, \$207,000 had been raised! \$95,000 was from local banks and the rest was from individual investors and businesses. Valley has 4.5 employees and had fundraised maybe \$50-60,000 in prior years so they are very excited about this accomplishment. It is hoped that a housing project manager position can now be (re)created. Jim Levy was very involved in this successful outcome. The banks get the tax credit too.

Local strategic planning is required for participation. The 2014 submission is acceptable for three years but a joint meeting with the Amherst, Easthampton and Northampton housing partnerships had been previously discussed. It was decided to hold such an event in the spring, as a session like this would address our Housing Partnership strategic plan goals for community education and collaboration, in addition to meeting VCDC's goals for the CITC Program. Further discussion will be held regarding this.

Mr. Roy asked Ms. Campbell about the size of projects they would prefer to develop. She said she would not go smaller than 30 units. Due to operational costs such as funding source(s) oversight, lack of rental income when people don't pay regularly, snow removal, etc. combine to make smaller projects difficult to operate. She concluded her remarks by saying there are no other projects currently in the pipeline for Northampton. If they are able to hire a housing project manager in the spring, it would be part of that persons' responsibility to find new projects. She was thanked for her attendance and she departed the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Minutes/ from the December meeting were approved as submitted.

Strategic Planning Update

Peg reviewed the annual action plan. She noted that a task implementation update would be a monthly item on the agenda to insure forward progress. Ms. Wallace gave an update on the Northampton Lodging project, which is starting to focus on tenant relocation planning while they await funding awards.

- Community Education/ need to get information on website on various topics (historical accomplishments, need for members, landlord workshop, landlord resources, shelter info. Etc.

- Op-eds/ the first one of the year can be about the fair housing workshop and the support for landlords/ featuring the NHP and John Fisher/ will discuss on 1/19; could also include rebate information for energy efficiency improvements/ time sensitive
- Needs Assessment/ staff responsibility, on-going data collection and analysis
- New unit creation/ pursuing the tax abatement program (M. Roy, Chair Shaw and staff meeting with Amherst Finance Director 1/6; need to move on NHA parcels
- Preservation/ staff in communication with Leeds Village owner/ 2018 expiration date
- Housing Rehab/ staff needs to do RFP with Partnership input (Feb. meeting)
- Fair Housing/ new HUD format not due until 2019 but still have annual activity and reporting responsibilities
- Zoning/ Committee will create a memo for the Planning Dept. with comments on the recently completed Agora Report
- Community Collaborations: will plan spring session with area housing partnerships and housing authorities to discuss regional issues/ work with Valley CDC on this event

Members expressed satisfaction with the action plan components. Ad hoc committees can be formed as necessary moving forward.

Election of Officers

Chair Shaw was re-elected and Peter Frothingham agreed to serve as Vice-chair for another year. They were thanked for their willingness.

Housing Authority Report

Ms. Wallace said the new Executive Director has significant tenant support and things are moving forward. They are having discussions about the Burts Pit project and all agreed to invite her to the regional meeting in the spring, then maybe a session with just her, later in the year.

Adjourn/ the meeting concluded at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Peg Keller