

NORTHAMPTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Minutes

June 3, 2019

Members Present: Vice-Chair Patrick Boughan, Gordon Shaw, Alex Jarret, Julio Alves, Carmen Junno, Richard Abuza, Edgar Cancel, Tess Poe, Dan Krassner, and Jim Reis. Also present, Megan McDonough, Executive Director of Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity (PV Habitat). (Chair Rev. Weir is on sabbatical and will be absent for 3 months).

Call to Order: Vice Chair Boughan called the meeting to order with the presence of a quorum at 5:35 p.m. Approval of the minutes was delayed until after the Habitat presentation by Ms. McDonough.

Habitat for Humanity

Ms. McDonough began by overviewing current construction projects in Northampton:

Current Project Updates – Garfield Avenue

- There are 3-4 houses under construction in Northampton right now
- One house is at the Garfield Avenue site. This is the last lot of a mini-neighborhood of PV Habitat homes. This land came to the city as brownfield (a former munition dump); after the land was remediated, an RFP was issued for the development of affordable housing and PV Habitat was selected. This final home completes the build out of the neighborhood.
- The design of this last home was the result of PV Habitat's "Small lots, Big ideas" initiative and sought to reduce the cost of the home lower than previous projects. As a result, they were able to lower the income requirement to 22k (previously closer to 50k) which is the yearly wage of a minimum hourly wage worker. The homeowner of this property is a machine operator who otherwise would have little to no chance to own a home.
- This project was PV Habitat's first partnering with a local bank to finance the project. Previously, PV Habitat provided the loan to the homeowner at 0%. On this project Easthampton Savings Bank in partnership with Northampton/Greenfield Co-operative bank is providing one of the loans. The homeowner will have two loans, one from the partner bank and one from PV Habitat. The loans will cost of the homeowner the same as the previous method but allows PV Habitat to improve its cash flow to continue building new homes.
- The neighborhood at Garfield Ave has an HOA to address joint ownership responsibilities for a storm-water pipe and ditch.

- PV Habitat properties are affordable and deed restricted. When a homeowner wishes to sell they must notify PV Habitat and then PV Habitat will set the selling price such that someone at 80% of AMI will be able to purchase the home. PV Habitat generally does not provide a loan for subsequent sales of the home.
- This Friday, 6/7/19, at 2-4PM PV Habitat is hosting an award ceremony and block party at the home at Garfield Avenue. PV Habitat will be awarding *Small Home Hero Awards*. Recipients include the City of Northampton (will be received by the Mayor) for its policy stances (ADUs), zoning, design competitions to increase awareness, etc. and a woman from Greenfield who built her own small home (450 sq ft). Please attend if you are able! <https://www.pvhabitat.org/event/small-home-hero-award-ceremony/>

Current Project Updates – Glendale Road

- This was originally going to be a 25-30-unit subdivision off of Glendale Road, but the city ended up purchasing it as conservation land with four building lots set aside. PV Habitat was selected via an RFP to develop these lots. They have three homes under construction now.
- This type of modular home construction is new for PV Habitat. They are working with a company in Vermont that formed after Hurricane Irene destroyed hundreds of mobile homes. The goal was to replace those mobile homes with higher quality, well-insulated modular homes. PV Habitat helped get state approval to allow this company's modular homes to be built in Massachusetts. These are two-story, 1200 square feet modular homes. They are very energy efficient, as PV Habitat wants to make sure that home owners can afford to heat their homes. Schematics of the homes were viewed at the meeting and can be seen here <https://www.pvhabitat.org/about/homes/northampton/>. PV Habitat worked with the factory to have these modulares arrive less finished than is typical for the factory to allow homeowners to participate in the construction.
- Construction has been somewhat delayed because of some project management challenges about getting an electrical line run to the site (didn't get done before winter, which meant there was no heat to work in the winter). PV Habitat is now working to meet a deadline with DPW to have a certain amount of work done in order to connect to the city water during a road construction project. If PV Habitat missed this window they will need to wait a few years for another opportunity. These are some of the challenges of being a smaller developer.
- While PV Habitat was granted some exemptions from a recently passed City tree replacement ordinance (trees greater than 20" in diameter must be replaced), but since they are building in a pine forest PV Habitat has needed to pay into the City's tree fund which has increased the cost of the project over original estimates. The ordinance was revised to exempt afford zero-net energy homes, but since this project has a long driveway PV Habitat still faced some impacts

from it. Jim asked what role the Partnership can play in these kind of issues. Ms. McDonough suggested that having a housing voice at Planning Board meetings would be helpful so that concerns about trees and other items are put in the context of the need for housing. Mr. Boughan, Mr. Reis, and others expressed interest in attending future meetings. Ms. McDonough said she will notify us in the future when PV Habitat is going before a city board such as Planning Board.

General updates and possible roles for the Partnership

- Mr. Boughan asked Ms. McDonough to recap the *Big Enough* project for members. Ms. McDonough discussed their yearlong project to look at all the impediments to construction of inexpensive homes. They categorized the barriers into four major areas: zoning and regulations, ownership and finances, design and construction, and cultural expectations and social acceptability. The full report is available here: <https://www.pvhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Big-Enough-Final-Report-12-15-17.pdf>
A general information page and links to the Big Enough Facebook group and can be found here: <https://www.pvhabitat.org/big-enough/>
Findings included that banks don't want to give loans for homes costing less than \$100,000; that small lots may not be permitted in many towns, ADUs may not be permitted; that simple shapes keeps costs down, and much more.
- The Garfield and Glendale projects are "test cases" for some of the findings of the Big Enough report. PV Habitat will be writing a "lessons learned" from these projects that will be publically available.
- Mr. Boughan asked what the Partnership can do going forward to assist PV Habitat with affordable home development.
- Ms. McDonough noted how the Partnership and City had previously provided CDBG money to help with soft costs and that has helped make projects happen. She thanked the Partnership.
- PV Habitat's time is generally occupied with production of current projects and needs help with identifying parcels for future projects. Wayne Feiden, the Planning Department, and the City have been a help in this area for many years. Ms. McDonough noted two potential sites:
 - One is a parcel that the Northampton Housing Authority owns which had been proposed as being transferred to the city. It required an act of the legislature and former Sen. Rosenberg and late Rep. Kocot had put this through; however, it did not include the words "at no cost" and because of this DCAM wants the city to pay Fair Market Value to acquire the land which exceeds the budget for a PV Habitat project (generally Habitat pays \$30k or less for land). Perhaps the Partnership can be the squeaky wheel to get this fixed on the state level. Mr. Boughan will bring a fuller history

to share with the Partnership. Ms. Keller knows this site's full history and will be at future meetings.

- Another parcel is a home on Corticelli Street (Florence) that is current marked with a "red-x" by the building department for future demolition. Perhaps this could be an affordable PV Habitat site? What information gathering or advocacy could the Partnership do to for this site?
- Mr. Reis noted that there was a former Moose lodge on Cooke Ave that may be a possible site too.
- Ms. McDonough noted a cold call she got from a homeowner in Baystate that may be interested in selling to Habitat. It was noted that the homeowner may be eligible for a tax credit, but Ms. McDonough responded that you need to owe enough in taxes to benefit from a sizeable donation like that so it unclear if this homeowner would benefit.
- Ms. Poe asked if PV Habitat receives calls for people looking for homes that aren't standalone houses such as a multi-family or condo. She noted the burden that yard maintenance and snow removal can be on a homeowner and that many of these properties are farther out. Ms. McDonough said they get calls of people looking for homes but they are not particular about many of the details, they are looking for a home generally. In response to another member's question she noted that the small homes seem more viable closer to transit. Once a homeowner is car-dependent their wants for their home shift and fit the small home less well.

Ms. McDonough was thanked for her time and asked to keep in touch with the Partnership about their projects and where we can provide assistance.

The April minutes were reviewed. The date on the April meeting minutes was incorrect and needs to be changed from March 4, 2019 to April 1, 2019. With that correction Mr. Reis made a motion to approve the minutes, it was seconded by Mr. Jarrett. The motion carried with Mr. Abuza and Mr. Cancel abstains as they had not attended the April meeting.

The May minutes were reviewed and no corrections or changes were made. Mr. Abuza made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Jarret seconded the motion. The motion carried with Mr. Reis abstaining.

The Fair Housing Public Forum with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) was recapped by Mr. Boughan. The meeting was a success with over 60 people attending which filled the seats laid out for the lecture session and the small group

sessions. One family took advantage of the free childcare. Attendees were active in both sessions and this forum will be included in the final report.

Mr. Boughan asked for comments on the forum. Mr. Reis expressed that he wanted to ensure that PVPC properly includes the forum in the report. Ms. Junno noted that PVPC was taking notes during the presentation of solutions by the small groups.

Mr. Boughan updated the group that Ms. Keller is working closely with PVPC on the final report and expressed her and the Partnerships' expectations for the final report. Ms. Poe asked what our deadline is for this report. Mr. Boughan stated the HUD deadline is farther out but that there may be a proposed deadline for completion of this project with PVPC. Ms. Keller is more familiar with this and can speak to it at the next meeting. There was general agreement that this should be discussed further at the July meeting.

Policy Sub-Committee – Mr. Boughan overviewed the draft protocol for use of the revenue generated by the Air B and B unit tax developed by the sub-committee. The draft is as follows:

Proposed Process for Expenditure of Future Affordable Housing Funds Collected via Short-Term Rental Community Impact Fee

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Given that the amount of funds that will be collected is unknown at this time, the Housing Partnership does not recommend expenditure of future funds to any particular program at this time. The Housing Partnership recommends the following process be adopted in ordinance regarding expenditure of these funds.

- Either the Mayor or the Housing Partnership can initiate a proposal for expenditure of the funds in the account at any time. For example, if the Housing Partnership has a proposal for expending funds it will submit that proposal to the Mayor.
 - The Mayor can either accept the proposal and submit it to city council for approval;
 - Or, the Mayor can issue a counter-proposal to the Housing Partnership for review. The Housing Partnership will then issue a recommendation on the counter-proposal.

- The Mayor can choose to submit this counter-proposal to the city council.
- The process is similar if the proposal originates with the Mayor, starting by submitting the proposal to the Housing Partnership for a recommendation.
- The Mayor can submit a proposal to city council even if the Housing Partnership doesn't recommend it (after utilizing the process noted above), however the submission to council shall note the Housing Partnership's position.

The City's CDBG Administrator shall keep track of the account balance give quarterly updates to the Housing Partnership. After some time has passed the Housing Partnership may revisit this process and suggest revisions. END OF DRAFT

Mr. Abuza noted that City Council should be capitalized and asked to re-word the last clause to be more positive.

Mr. Krassner proposed simplifying the middle bulleted section so it doesn't appear to anticipate conflict (while still providing a resolution mechanism) and instead focuses on developing solutions together.

Mr. Reis emphasized that the goal of the document was to make sure the Housing Partnership is consulted on decisions involving affordable housing in the city. Mr. Krassner emphasized that his comments were focused on language changes while agreeing with Mr. Reis.

Ms. Poe asked if we should look into changing our part of the City's Charter during the current Charter Review Commission work. Mr. Boughan suggested that we accept the language change and defer the charter discussion to another meeting. Mr. Abuza expressed interest in acting on the charter language. Mr. Reis spoke to concerns about the Partnership being left out of the loop and **made a motion to have review of Housing Partnerships' charter language be first on the agenda for next meeting. Mr. Jarrett seconded the motion. The vote in favor was unanimous to discuss the HP's charter language at the July Partnership meeting.**

Ms. Poe asked what we define as "affordable housing" expenditures that are acceptable under the policy. Mr. Boughan noted this in the document and said the sub-committee will do further work and return to the Housing Partnership with an updated draft.

The final text (after the bulleted section) post editing is as follows and will be edited further by the sub-committee:

The City's CDBG Administrator (currently Peg Keller) shall keep track of the account balance give quarterly updates to the Housing Partnership.

We recommend after some practical experience that the Housing Partnership revisit this policy.

ADD what can be spent on "Affordable Housing" - maybe do things that won't be funded by CPA/others. Soft costs?

Write this such that CHSSP is eligible.

Rewrite this as to not anticipate conflict, be more positive. Working together on joint projects

END DRAFT

Community Housing Support Services Project – Mr. Boughan stated that he does not have significant updates on this project and Ms. Keller can provide more information at the next meeting. Mr. Reis expressed concerns about how CHD is running this program, noting issues with their voicemail, lack of information on their websites and other concerns. He suggested that CHD come to a meeting in the next two months to update the Partnership about the program and detail out how they will work to secure additional funding. This will inform how the Partnership proceeds including the need to RFP the program. There was general agreement and concern for the CHSSP program. **Mr. Reis made a motion to schedule CHD to come to a meeting between now and September to report on the current status of the CHSSP project and CHD's plan to secure future funding. Mr. Jarret seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

Hampshire Heights/Florence Heights – Mr. Cancel and Mr. Jarrett gave an update on this project. They reported that the playground group had met with Peter Wells of Berkshire Design and looked at two sites for the playground. One is near the new gardens on the idea that parents could garden while kids play on the playground, and that kids would be nearby to become involved in gardening. There were logistical questions about children's style of play, handicap access, and safety of various locations.

They may build a second structure at a location where children currently play at Hampshire Heights. They will be getting some ideas from Berkshire Design soon, in

time for the next CPA funding round. Group members are reviewing recent CPA playground applications to inform the Hampshire Heights playground application.

Ms. Junno and Ms. Poe asked about possible cost and Mr. Cancel and Mr. Jarrett were unsure. Mr. Boughan noted that Jackson Streets playground was over \$200k, but that it's a much larger collection of equipment.

Landlord/Tenant Workshop Members agreed to move up this agenda item since it had been squeezed to the end of the last few meetings. Mr. Shaw recapped previous landlord workshops and that they were successes and had over 30 attendees. The last meeting was promoted by bulk mailing owners of two plus family structures about the meeting as well press releases and other promotions. Mr. Shaw said that based on previous meetings there was in interest in building code and code enforcements so he was looking to work with the building department to answer questions about enforcements instead.

Mr. Abuza expressed concern that landlords may not be willing to ask questions of code enforcement officials and maybe it would be best to have another municipalities code inspectors there. Mr. Shaw contended that the goal was to have city officials be seen as helpers rather than just enforcement. Mr. Abuza wasn't sure which approach would be best. Mr. Boughan suggested that a FAQ list be developed and an anonymous way of submitting written questions be used to avoid discomfort among attendees.

Mr. Shaw said that early fall would be ideal for a workshop. Mr. Boughan asked that Mr. Shaw be prepared to propose a date(s) at the July Partnership meeting (and to the needed leg work in the meantime). Mr. Shaw agreed.

Mr. Shaw noted that the goal is also to have a tenant workshop or a tenant support service providers workshop but suggested tackling that after the Landlord workshop.

Zoning Sub-Committee – Mr. Boughan noted that the zoning group is working on standing policy positions as suggested by Ms. Poe and the Partnership. There are no updates at this time but hopefully drafts will be ready for the September meeting.

Membership – Ms. Poe stated her potential new member should be in touch soon. Mr. Boughan offered to reach out to them if desired.

Op-Ed - The latest piece on Housing Stability was run on May 22nd. Mr. Reis was thanked for his work on the op-ed.

For the next topic Mr. Reis suggested reporting on the findings of the PVPC report. Mr. Boughan expressed that he'd like the Partnership to present the findings at a City Council meeting since they paid for the study (and hopefully it would get news coverage as a result). All members expressed agreement with this idea. Members agreed to brainstorm on further op-eds and outreach before next meeting.

Next meeting Mr. Cancel asked if the next meeting will be on July 1 or July 8 given the July 4 holiday. Mr. Boughan asked which date was best for those in attendance. July 1 was good for all members except Mr. Krassner who can attend neither. July 1 was agreed to as the next meeting date.

Adjourn/ The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Patrick Boughan