

NORTHAMPTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Minutes

January 7, 2019

Members Present: Chair Todd Weir, Vice-Chair Patrick Boughan, Kyla Prior, Becky Lockwood, Gordon Shaw, Mark Goggins, Richard Abuza, Edgar Cancel. Also present, Wayne Feiden, Director of the Office of Planning and Sustainability, Carolyn Misch, Permits Planner, Office of Planning and Sustainability and Peg Keller, staff.

Call To Order: Chair Weir called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. All present introduced themselves.

Guests/ Office of Planning and Sustainability

Director Feiden presented a Power Point slide show that described efforts his office has pursued to facilitate the creation of affordable housing. Chair Weir framed the discussion that followed by asking how the Partnership can better partner with their department to advocate for those common goals. Wayne said physical presence at the public hearings with formal endorsements from the Housing Partnership is valuable. Any proposals for actual zoning changes come to the Partnership as part of the current City Council mandated vetting process already.

Ms. Misch said OPS staff can only do so much with their own advocacy. It would be helpful if the NHP could weigh in on all housing projects, not just affordable ones. She gave the Hinckley Street project as an example of small scale, scattered site housing that got push back from the neighborhood. Residents typically fear change, but often projects gain acceptance later. Although not affordable, it was a smart growth, energy efficient design. There is also an aspect of forward thinking developers being discouraged to pursue projects when social media can turn out large numbers of people (only) in opposition.

Mr. Abuza said the NHP recognized early on, the interconnectedness between housing and other community development sectors. He felt that when the City Codes were redone, the mandate for utilizing the NHP for recommendations on housing activities in general, was stripped and he finds that unfortunate. Mr. Reis asked that the NHP be included in this communication loop, even if it is not mandated. Participation at the Tech Review meetings was discussed. Peg receives the notices, but having an actual Partnership member attend regularly was determined to be preferable.

In summary, the following items were noted as possible next steps:

- Assign an NHP member to attend tech review meetings
- Zoning Sub-Committee (Patrick and Jim) meet with OPS as needed, or on a regularly scheduled basis, such as twice annually, to check in & be alerted for advocacy opportunities well ahead of time
- NHP show support for all appropriate housing projects, not just affordable ones
- Sign up for City Council agendas to see proposals coming forward as well as Planning Department listserv
- Utilize YIMBY social media network for advocacy

Ms. Misch noted that in reality, the likelihood of smaller housing projects including affordable units is slim. Mr. Boughan said the NHP is interested in market rate affordable (small “a”) as well. The Planning staff was thanked for their attendance, and all agreed that the NHP can be helpful to the department’s efforts if they/we are aware of what is moving forward and the timelines associated with the public process.

Minutes were approved as submitted from the December meeting. The vote was unanimous in favor, with Mr. Shaw abstaining, due to his absence.

Election of Officers Mr. Abuza made a motion to elect the slate of officers proposed: Rev. Todd Weir to serve as Chair, Mr. Boughan to serve as Vice-Chair and Ms. Prior to serve as Clerk. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reis; the vote in favor unanimous.

Mission Statement Although the bulk of the discussion occurred at the last meeting, there was no quorum present for a vote. Therefore, with a quorum present this evening, a vote was taken. The vote to adopt the Mission Statement was unanimous.

Membership This item will be moved to the February agenda, to more fully discuss recruitment efforts needed to achieve diversity goals.

Fair Housing Peg provided an update on the stakeholder group sessions scheduled for January 23rd and January 30th. The invites will go out tomorrow. Members asked about the survey distribution, which Peg will discuss with PVPC, as the survey monkey has now been completed.

Policy Committee Vice-Chair Boughan reported that an invitation has been issued to dialogue with the Chair of the Planning Board Tess Poe. She is unable to attend meetings on Monday nights, so they may schedule a meeting with her and the Policy

Sub-Committee separately on another evening. Ms. Prior noted that the New Member Guide has been revised and will be re-distributed to members for final comment.

OP-Ed's will be discussed at the February meeting.

CPC/NHP Members solidified the attendance and presentation plan for the Community Preservation Committee meeting scheduled for January 16th. This invite is a result of Chair Weir's request to discuss the process for addressing applications for housing projects in the future. Chair Weir, Vice-Chair Boughan, Ms. Lockwood and Mr. Alves will attend. Major points to convey will be:

- Acknowledging and understanding the dynamics behind the affordable housing funding percentage being lower than the other categories
- Addressing the challenge for developers to have to submit to multiple funding rounds to secure the funding they need for the larger affordable housing projects
- Addressing the myth that these larger projects can make up the local funding gaps with State funds
- Is there a possibility of bonding for the housing projects, as has been done for the other project categories?

Chair Weir said the Committee seemed very receptive to engaging in this dialogue. He has received input from Valley Community Development Corporation and The Community Builders that will inform his remarks.

Adjourn/ The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Peg Keller