



**Minutes  
Housing Partnership  
August 27, 2019  
Special Meeting  
Town Administration Building**

**Members In Attendance**

Fred Reynolds (Chair), Cliff Cook, David Leon, Helen Oliver, and Andrea Adams (Senior Planner, Department of Community Development & Planning (DCDP))

**Others in Attendance:** Jackie Dobson (Solutions for Accessibility), Jennifer VanCampen (Executive Director, MetroWest Collaborative Development), and Elodia Thomas (Resident)

**I. Review of Draft Minutes: July 2019**

Mr. Reynolds asked for a motion to approve the July 16, 2019 draft Minutes. Mr. Leon moved to approve the draft Minutes as amended. Mr. Cook seconded, and the Minutes were unanimously approved.

**II. Update/New Housing Production Plan**

Ms. Adams noted the Partnership had received a series of documents to continue discussion of a new Housing Production Plan (HPP), following on the Partnership meeting in July. This included:

- A. Draft Housing Production Plan narrative, created by Mr. Reynolds, and added to by Ms. Adams
- B. Bulleted outline, created by Mr. Cook, added to by the Partnership on July 16, 2019, and edited by Ms. Adams
- C. A table created by Ms. Adams that provides the status of the 2014 HPP, dated 8/14/19
- D. The Table of Contents of the 2104 HPP

The Partnership discussed how to approach creating Goals for the new HPP. Using the narrative created by Mr. Reynolds as a starting point, Mr. Cook questioned the language in Strategy 1.4. He noted that the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) was not in favor of a local preference. Mr. Reynolds acknowledged that, but said that the Town should take into consideration the many local people looking for housing. Ms. Thomas echoed Mr. Reynolds' sentiment. Mr. Cook suggested the language could be made more general, to recommend the Town consider a local preference. Mr. Leon asked if DHCD would allow a segmented local preference, such as low or very low income persons, or persons with disabilities? Ms. VanCampen said that there is one method of including a local preference, and that a defector "set-aside" of units for a particular group, such as low income, was not allowed. She also noted that the local preference is only used once, for the initial unit lease-up, so it has limited benefit going forward. Ms. VanCampen said the entire local preference lottery process is tightly constrained by State regulations. The Partnership's consensus was to soften the proposed language as suggested by Mr. Cook.

Ms. Adams noted that she would consult with Ms. Wiener, the Senior Transportation Planner, concerning the second full paragraph in Strategy 1.4, which dealt with public transportation. She noted Watertown had been working for several years on a Transportation Management Association, to address the issues raised in Strategy 1.4. She also noted a recent parking study of mixed use/residential project in Watertown indicated they were significantly over-parked.

Mr. Cook said that several of the Strategies listed in the narrative were not really implementation tools, but aspirations, such as using CPA/Housing Trust funds to develop properties.

Ms. Adams noted with respect to Strategy 2.2, that the project review fees are intended to pay for some or all of the cost of review. She also noted that in some cases, the fee was relatively small (\$250) for the size of most residential developments subject to a discretionary permit. As such, she suggested that waiving municipal fees would be of limited benefit, and, if implemented for larger project, could be construed as the municipality tacitly supporting a particular development, or burden shifting.

Mr. Reynolds appreciated the constructive criticism, and suggested that the narrative was his attempt to translate the bulleted points into fuller text. For example, he noted that it was his intent to seek help from Mr. Leon in fleshing out Strategy 3.2. He suggested that Mr. Leon was best poised to articulate the need for units for those with physical, cognitive and developmental disabilities.

Mr. Cook commented on Strategy 4.1 and 4.2, noting that Cambridge is creating incentives for certain types of projects, particularly smaller multi-family (4 units) developments. He noted these incentives included zoning relief from dimensional and density requirements. Mr. Cook noted the intent was to reduce the site acquisition costs. In return, the proposed project would have to be 100% affordable. He noted that he was not necessarily advocating the exact same thing for Watertown, but such relief, where appropriate, could be used.

Ms. Adams suggested additional limitations could be put on which projects would be eligible for these kinds of zoning relief, and could include projects done by Community Housing Development Organization, such as MWCD, non-profits, or building conversion project with more affordable units than required.

Mr. Cook and Mr. Reynolds noted with respect to Strategy 6.1, the Town needed additional capacity to deal with all housing programs. Mr. Reynolds noted that the Town was in the process of hiring a staff person to deal with the Community Preservation Act monies. The Partnership noted the work done by the Council Subcommittee, and suggested the HPP strongly encourage the Town to increase its staff capacity/bandwidth, as there were now over 300 Inclusionary Zoning units to monitor, as well as a number of HOME loans, and HOME-assisted units. Mr. Cook noted that the Town is likely to consider new affordable housing programs, such as local vouchers, rental assistance, and a home improvement loan program, among others, given the work done by the Council Subcommittee.

Mr. Leon suggested starting with the 2014 HPP Goals, and incorporating language from Mr. Reynolds' draft narrative. Based on the foregoing discussion, the Partnership's consensus was this was a good way forward.

Ms. VanCampen said that the system being established in Cambridge, to create a local "40-B" like process for small affordable developments would make a difference for non-profits and CHDOs to develop projects in Watertown. She also reminded the Partnership of the Council Subcommittee's discussion of establishing a preference for housing re-use when dealing with surplus municipal properties, such as the North Branch Library and unused former Police Station. She also recommended that the new HPP continue to identify sites in Watertown, even generally, where affordable housing development was preferred. Ms. VanCampen said that DHCD gave HPPs with these goals higher marks than those HPPs that did not preferentially identify sites for affordable housing.

Mr. Reynolds, using the Table of Contents from the 2014 HPP, recommended the Partnership Members take on the task of updating the various parts of Section III: Housing Needs and Demand Assessment. Based on the discussion, the breakout of sections for review was:

- Section III, A – Demographic Analysis – Mr. Cook
- Section III, B – Housing Characteristics – Mr. Cook
- Section III, C – Housing Market Conditions – Mr. Reynolds
- Section III, D – Housing Affordability – Ms. Oliver

Mr. Reynolds said the Partnership Members should look over the text and decide what should be kept and updated.

Ms. VanCampen echoed Mr. Reynolds' comment. She strongly recommended that the new HPP did not need to be 165 pages. She said it was more important to provide content and data that supported the Town's goals, or provided an insight into a relevant trend.

Ms. Adams noted she would seek out the School Enrollment figures being used as part of the School construction projects, and provide that to Mr. Cook. She said she would also provide narrative for Section IV: Constraints on Development, and Section V: Existing Municipal Tools and Resources.

Mr. Reynolds also asked Ms. Adams to follow up with Councilor Palomba, on the status of the Subcommittee's work, and to distribute a WORD version of the 2014 HPP to the Partnership. He also asked Ms. Adams to locate and distribute the Subcommittee's final report to the Full Council on its findings.

### **III. Discussion of the HOME Consortium 2021-2025 Consolidated Plan**

Ms. Adams noted that the HOME Consortium was beginning the process of crafting its next 5 year Consolidated Plan. She noted that templates had been distributed to all of the municipalities, that described specific data points each community would have to provide back to Newton, as the head Participating Jurisdiction. She said each municipality's responses would then be consolidated into an over-arching plan document. This document would be ultimately sent to the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for approval. Ms. Adams noted that she had already created a preliminary draft of the Participation template, and had reviewed the Housing Needs/Market Assessment. She noted that the bulk of the data from the HPP document could be used to complete the Housing Needs/Market Assessment, which was due back to Newton on or before October 11, 2019.

Mr. Reynolds noted that Developers Conference had been held earlier today (8/27/19), and provided the Partnership with a single copy of the project packet for a new mixed use development proposed at 166 Main Street. He said this project would be placed on the Partnership's September Agenda.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. Reynolds asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Cook moved to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Oliver seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.