



**Watertown Housing Partnership
Meeting Minutes
Special Meeting
May 2, 2017
Watertown Administration Building**

Members In Attendance

Fred Reynolds (Chair), Cliff Cook, Brian Costello (Watertown Housing Authority), David Leon, and Andrea Adams (Senior Planner, Department of Community Development & Planning (DCDP))

I. Discussion of Proposed Zoning Text Amendment: Assisted Living in the I-3 Zone

The Members continued their discussion of the proposed Zoning Text Amendment, a request to allow Assisted Living as a permitted use in the I-3 Zoning District. They used a draft letter crafted by DCDP staff, as amended by Mr. Leon, as a starting point.

Ms. Adams provided additional context for the discussion, noting that *Assisted Living* as defined in the Zoning Ordinance (WZO) includes Independent Care, Assisted Living and Memory Care housing/service models. She noted the WZO was amended (Use Table) in 2011 to create the use category of Assisted Living, and to permit it by Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SP/SR) in specific zoning districts. The Residence at Watertown Square went through SP/SPR in 2012, and was classified as an Institutional Use, thereby being exempted from the requirement to provide affordable units. Ms. Adams also noted she had contacted the Department of Housing and Community Development, and DHCD had clarified that “housing units” would count towards the overall base number of units when calculating Watertown’s progress to achieving ten percent of the housing stock as “affordable.” She also noted that the affordable units at Brigham House, which provides affordable Assisted Living, would count towards Watertown’s total number of affordable housing units, regardless of whether the units there are classified as a “housing unit” or as a “Group Quarters,” which are not defined by DHCD as “housing units.”

The Members strongly expressed the desire for Assisted Living projects to provide affordable housing. Member Cook also said the US Census counts Assisted Living units as “housing” units, such that these units will *absolutely* be included in the denominator when Watertown’s percentage of affordable housing is recalculated by the State. Doing so effectively undercuts all the work that went into raising the Inclusionary Zoning percentage to 15% from 12.5%.

The Members discussed various possible options with respect to requiring some type of affordability for Assisted Living projects, including, but not limited to:

- Cash contribution in lieu of units
- A mix of cash in lieu and units
- A lesser amount of Inclusionary units: 5% instead of 15%
- That only Independent Care projects contribute cash in lieu or units

Member Costello noted that the Housing Authority provides a service component to some of the Authority’s units, but has been unable to extend this service to all of the housing units. He suggested that if the Town were to require a cash in lieu payment, some of the funds could be directed to expand the Housing Authority’s service model.

Chair Reynolds suggested that if cash in lieu seemed appropriate, as it eliminated the need for a complex housing + service component affordability set aside for Assisted Living and Memory Care projects, the Partnership should recommend this course of action to the Planning Board.

Member Leon strongly agreed and advocated for all such projects to contribute something towards affordability in Watertown, but suggested that the Partnership had time to provide strong feedback to the Planning Board and DCDP, the current Zoning Text Amendment notwithstanding.

Ms. Adams noted that the Petitioner for the Text Amendment has not filed for further review, and suggested that there was some time for the Partnership to formulate a recommendation to the DCDP. She noted that once a Text Amendment is first noticed for a public hearing, which commonly occurs first before the Planning Board, it becomes effective for all projects that have not yet completed a review process. This means that if a project is under review for a Special Permit/Site Plan Review, but does not have the final Board decision in hand, the substance of the Text Amendment would apply to that project.

The Partnership reviewed the draft letter to the Planning Board, as amended by Member Leon. The consensus was to add an additional sentence emphasizing that Assisted Living as a general use should be required to contribute in some way towards affordable housing in Watertown.

With this change, and with direction to Member Leon to update his revised draft, the consensus was to submit the letter to the Planning Board in time for the scheduled mailing on May 5, 2017, in advance of the Board meeting on May 10, 2017.

Adjourn

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

Mr. Costello moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.