



TOWN OF WATERTOWN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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Minutes of Watertown Housing Partnership Meeting January 19, 2021 6 PM, Virtual Meeting by Zoom and WCA-TV

Members in Attendance

Fred Reynolds (Chair), Cliff Cook, David Leon, Helen Oliver, Michael Lara.

Non-members present: Steve Magoon and Larry Field (staff), and a member of the public.

I. Review of Draft Minutes

Minutes of December 15, 2020 were reviewed and approved unanimously.

II. Municipal affordable housing trust

Larry asked members to provide comments on the planning department's memo on creation of a municipal affordable housing trust, particularly on the continued existence of the housing partnership if such a trust were created (memo linked to meeting agenda). Several members said having two entities would be duplicative and confusing. They also thought that if the main reason to continue the partnership is affordable housing advocacy, there is no reason the trust cannot perform this role. Cliff agreed that it would be better not to set aside trustee slots for individuals who belong to other municipal committees or boards.

There was discussion about how a trust would obtain Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding. While there are communities (e.g., Cambridge) that make annual CPA transfers, it is expected that the Watertown Community Preservation Committee/Town Council would require a trust to apply for funding project-by-project. Fred said that this approach would make it difficult for the trust to respond quickly to acquisition opportunities. David noted that it was possible that the committee would cede some operating funds annually while requiring project applications for larger sums. Since the Human Services Sub-Committee will discuss a Watertown municipal affordable housing trust at its next meeting (likely February 24), Fred suggested that members attend and provide their views.

III. Local preference in affordable housing selection

The discussion started with a PowerPoint presentation providing background on use of local preference in affordable housing selection (slides linked to meeting agenda). Members agreed that the planning staff should continue to collect data on past Watertown lotteries as well as lotteries held in nearby communities. Members want to determine if, and to what extent, Watertown residents are not chosen for affordable housing slots and to what extent use of local preference will affect the selection of minority applicants. Cliff, who agreed to help analyze the data, expressed particular concern that local preference would have a negative impact on opportunities for African Americans.

IV. Emergency rental assistance program

Larry summarized the emergency rental assistance program's status. With the \$100,000 in state funds awarded to the Watertown Community Foundation for rental assistance, the Town will be able to postpone use of its committed funds. The Foundation designated Metro West Collaborative as administrator and largely adopted the same guidelines as used by the WHP's program. Metro West needed Town funds for part of the January assistance, but the state funds are now available and will be used until exhausted. There are currently 45 enrollees, with 4 more to be added shortly. Applications continue at the same rate.

V. Housing Plan, including implementation timeline

Larry reported that the plan is ready to be submitted but for four Massachusetts Housing Partnership graphs that have not been updated for the 2015-2019 American Community Survey data released in mid-December. Fred said that if members would like to suggest priorities in implementing the plan, they should email Larry.

VI. Other business

Members briefly discussed the status of the Housing Authority's federal repositioning proposal (it will be part of a council sub-committee report next week) and possible redevelopment of One Rosary Drive (a developer appears to be in the due diligence stage).

Meeting adjourned at 7:26pm.