



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Community Preservation Committee

Remote via Zoom

Mark Krackiewicz, Chair
Jason Cohen, Vice Chair
Jonathan Bockian
Bob DiRico
Dennis J. Duff
Allen Gallagher
Jamie O'Connell
Elodia Thomas
Matthew Walter

CPC Meeting Minutes - Thursday, February 3, 2022, held remotely via Zoom at 7PM.

Committee Members Present: Mark Krackiewicz, Chair; Jon Bockian, Bob DiRico, Dennis J. Duff, Allen Gallagher, Jamie O'Connell, Elodia Thomas, and Matthew Walter.

Others Present: Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator; Vincent Piccirilli, City Council, Vice President; John Gannon, Councilor-At-Large; John Airasian, Councilor-At-Large; Tony Palomba, Councilor-At-Large; Lisa Feltner, District B Councilor; Emily Izzo, District D Councilor; Nicole Gardner, District A Councilor; David Leon, Watertown Housing Partnership; Michael Lara, Watertown Housing Authority; Kristen Monti, Watertown Housing Authority; Emily Horgan, Watertown Housing Authority; Carsten Snow, Cambridge Housing Authority; Margaret Donnelly Moran, Cambridge Housing Authority; and Jan Singer, Watertown Community Foundation.

1. Call to Order

Mark Krackiewicz called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and stated the meeting was being held remotely according to the Act extending the Governor's Emergency Order and waiving certain provisions of Open Meeting Law. Mark then requested a roll call.

2. Acceptance of 2022-1-20-Draft-CPC-Minutes

After the roll call, this item was moved to follow the committee discussion on the 103 Nichols Avenue Project below. When the item was taken up, Mark asked if there were any proposed changes to the minutes. Elodia said they were confusing deferred discussion due to the time.

Motion: Dennis J. Duff moved to accept the minutes as written. Matthew Walter seconded the motion.

Vote: Dennis J. Duff, Matthew Walter, Allen Gallagher, Bob DiRico, Jamie O'Connell, Elodia Thomas, Mark Krackiewicz, and Jon Bockian, voted in favor.

3. Committee Discussion - 103 Nichols Avenue Project Application

Lanae introduced the project and remarked on the application completeness and provision of information requested by the committee. She summarized the comments by and concerns of the CPC. Lanae also reported on a meeting she attended with representatives from the Watertown Housing Authority (WHA), Beaverbrook STEP, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Community Economic Development

Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), and Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP). She informed the committee that Mark had received a letter, updated pro forma, and other materials from Mike Lara, which he asked to be shared with the CPC. Some of the information about the Facilities Consolidation Fund (FCF) had already been sent to the committee members. Lanae explained that she needed to provide some context before sharing the documents with the CPC. After the meeting mentioned previously, Lanae had a follow-up phone conversation with Will Morgan of CEDAC and learned that he was willing to work with WHA on the FCF design compliance issues. He suggested the WHA go through the design and FCF design guidelines point by point noting where the design did not comply. He recommended the WHA make changes where they could, and where they couldn't demonstrate how they met the spirit of the design guidelines or made some accommodation accepted by DDS.

Lead Committee Commenters

Allen presented that the project would greatly improve the site. He also emphasized it could take years to get partial funding from FCF for the first floor and to pursue other funding while the potential residents remained in dire need of this local housing opportunity. Allen noted CPCs in other communities made grants ranging from small amounts to large amounts, including the full funding of projects. He also stated the Community Preservation Plan and Application Manual did not require matching funds.

Elodia prefaced her remarks, stressing the need for a housing consultant due to the complexity of housing projects. One of her greatest concerns was the environmental assessment performed in the 1980s and the site's need for remediation. Since Elodia worked at the Northeastern University Disability Resource Center, she stated she was sensitive to the need for this type of housing with accessibility. Given how many years the property has been vacant, the time should be taken to properly vet the project and pursue multiple funding sources. She also pointed out the discrepancy in total development costs between two pro forma documents included in the application where costs increased substantially since the eligibility phase. Finally, she found the outdated information on FCF design guidelines and the difficulty finding DDS standards problematic. Elodia wanted to ensure the housing design met the needs of residents with physical disabilities and provided quality living conditions for all the potential residents.

Other Committee Member Comments

Mark asked for comments on the project from other members.

Jamie said the project appeared to serve a community in great need of housing. She pointed out the application was riddled with inconsistencies regarding the budget, the number of bedrooms, and other items, making it incredibly difficult to review. Jamie also declared the narrative was not crafted in a way to give an understanding of relationships between the entities involved and needed a great deal of clarification.

Mark thought the project met a community need and aligned with Community Preservation Plan guiding principles and housing goals for infill development, incorporated sustainable design and accessibility, and had some community support. Viewing it from a portfolio management perspective, he stated the project would absorb 14% of CPA funds and 70% of annual CPA revenue. From that standpoint, Mark thought the project could benefit from co-financing. He also thought co-financing could bring a partner or partners with housing expertise to the project. Mark reiterated that concerns

about potential environmental hazards needed to be addressed and noted Zero Energy had developed more creative designs on their previous projects. He hoped the final design would allow for more light in the common areas.

Jon said this is the type of project he would like to see funded. He questioned whether the CPC had all the information they needed to evaluate the project. Jon understood this type of housing could be very expensive, though he would appreciate the opinion of a housing expert about the appropriateness of the budget. In further evaluating the project, Jon wanted a more detailed timeline and information supporting costs. He was also very concerned about potential environmental issues on the site.

Dennis asked how many residents from Watertown would qualify for this housing. He inquired about local preference. He wanted to see funding being used for Watertown residents and did not want Watertown residents excluded from this type of housing opportunity. He agreed with Jamie about the inconsistencies in the application and with Elodia about hiring a housing expert. As to legal fees, Dennis asked how much Bill York was being paid and for an explanation of how funds from the state earmark were spent.

Elodia requested Beaverbrook STEP provide a breakdown by community of those who would be eligible for this home. She reminded the committee local preference only applied to the 1st round. Also, she would like the applicant to provide a simple analysis and checklist on how the design matches the DDS design standards.

Bob asked about whether the FCF financing was a possibility and was also in favor of bringing on a housing consultant. Lanae answered that it was a possibility if the WHA could accommodate the FCF design guidelines as she previously reported from her conversation with Will Morgan of CEDAC.

Michael Lara underscored they were far from reaching design compliance with FCF guidelines and he was concerned about the time it would take to bring the design into compliance. He would be willing to guarantee local preference for three residents and give local preference to four residents if that were part of a CPA grant agreement, however the tenant selection must meet Fair Housing Act regulations. He would address environmental concerns at the project presentation.

Jamie was not concerned about funding the project entirely but believed there were many unresolved issues. Therefore, she thought the project would benefit from having a housing expert review and analyze it.

Matt presumed the project had to be publicly bid, paying prevailing wages. He asked why not go through a non-profit developer. Mike noted the example of the Clarendon Hill project in Somerville where the Housing Authority worked with the non-profit, Preservation of Affordable Housing, and a for-profit developer. He stated there was public pressure to pay prevailing wages and use union labor for this project on formerly public land. Mike emphasized though this project is smaller scale it may not be under the radar.

Mark restated that he thought it was important to have a collaborator, though that partner would not have to join immediately. He supported funding some pre-development work and asked what other CPC members thought.

Councilor John Gannon responded to the question about whether Watertown's share of ARPA funds could be used for this project. He was uncertain if funds could be used to support a project from another governmental agency. Elodia asked If the Municipal Housing Trust received the funds could the funds be designated to a project like this. Councilor Gannon said that was an open question.

Councilor Tony Palomba supported the project, and thought it was the type of project the CPC should support. He considered some of the CPC's concerns such as comments about the design outside their realm. Councilor Palomba found the project team to be experts and the costs to be expected for this type of housing. He thought there were valid questions and thought the CPC's questions would be answered at the project presentation.

Elodia responded to Councilor Palomba's comment, noting the design guidelines call for design to fit in with the vernacular of the neighborhood, have outside space, and connect to the neighborhood. She realized the design may not be fully developed, but the CPC had to ensure the design met the criteria of DDS. Elodia again called for a checklist of DDS design requirements filled out by the applicant.

Matt questioned whether to Councilor Palomba's point, the CPC was evaluating items outside its purview. Jamie believed the issues raised were within the CPC's purview since the committee is making the funding recommendation to the City Council. She pointed out the CPC has an evaluation matrix that follows the Community Preservation Plan guiding principles.

Jon declared the CPC needed to examine what permits are needed, what regulations apply for other sources of financing and for DDS rent subsidies, and what would be the timelines for obtaining those items. Mark added if the project were recommended for funding, a grant agreement would have to state applicable laws must be met. Elodia added that if the CPC recommended the project for funding it would have to require a permanent affordability restriction—not a 40-year restriction.

Councilor Nicole Gardner stated she supported the project and looked forward to hearing answers to the CPC's questions at the project presentation. She offered to help Michael plan a community outreach event for the project.

Mark said he would be in favor of phasing the project with a first phase to advance design work, legal work, and pursuit of other funding, while the second phase would fund construction. Jamie thought the predevelopment work for such a small project wouldn't require much time in between completion and the next round of funding.

Elodia emphasized the environmental assessment issue, and the zoning relief issues must be resolved. She proposed WHA be creative in asking for zoning relief, such as eliminating some of the parking. With respect to funding predevelopment costs, Elodia questioned why so much was invested in design before having answers to the questions about the environmental assessment and zoning.

Mike replied that a more thorough explanation would be provided at the presentation. However, he said his legal counsel would explain why much of this work would be done after the design selection phase. Mike reported that he has had fruitful conversations with the Planning department regarding zoning.

Mark summarized that the project was worthy and that to aid the CPC in their decision making the committee members needed:

- clarity on the environmental issue and evidence the site met current environmental regulations
- more information on zoning relief required
- more details on the timeline
- evidence of compliance with DDS design standards
- to see good faith efforts made by WHA in seeking other funding

Mark restated it would be beneficial to have a partner as a co-financer and to bring another set of eyes on the project. He would like the committee to think about phasing the project. Dennis added to the summary that some were also advocating for Watertown residents.

Mark stated the grant agreement would likely require:

- a current environmental assessment
- zoning approvals
- a final design that met DDS standards
- final bid documents
- information about the qualifications of contractors
- evidence of good faith efforts to seek other sources of funding.

Jon pointed out some of this may be required before funding could be recommended and some may be required as part of the grant agreement conditions.

John Airasian said he supported the project and appreciates the CPC's due diligence, though questions remained.

Dennis recommended giving the Nichols Ave. project its own presentation date. The City Hall Geographical Painting project presentation would be on February 17th and the Irving Park presentation would be held in March.

4. Adjournment

Motion: Dennis moved to adjourn, and Allen seconded.

Vote: Matthew Walter, Bob DiRico, Jamie O'Connell, Elodia Thomas, Mark Krackiewicz, Jon Bockian, Dennis J. Duff and Allen Gallagher.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11P