



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Community Preservation Committee

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

Approved Meeting Minutes: Monday, May 16, 2022, held remotely via Zoom at 7PM.

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

Others Present: Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator; Anthony Palomba, City Council; Nicole Gardner, City Council; Michael Lara, Watertown Housing Authority (WHA); Kristen Monti, WHA; Carsten Snow-Eikelberg, Cambridge Housing Authority; Susan Falkoff; James Mello; and Bob Shay.

1. Call to Order

Mark Krackiewicz called the meeting to order at 7PM and stated the meeting was being held remotely according to the Acts extending the Governor's Emergency Order and waiving certain provisions of Open Meeting Law. Mark then requested a roll call and Lanae Handy called the roll. Jamie O'Connell and Jason Cohen were not present.

2. Committee Discussion 103 Nichols Avenue Project

Mark opened the discussion with a statement that the purpose of this special meeting was to determine how to proceed with the 103 Nichols Avenue project and address concerns about how communications and project information from Michael Lara were handled. He gave a timeline of his communications with Michael regarding the project. Mark explained there was a full agenda in April, including the final funding recommendations to the City Council. He requested an environmental assessment, detailed request for project funding, and revised project timeline from the Watertown Housing Authority before the project could be considered any further. Mark was planning to place the 103 Nichols Ave. project on the May 19th agenda and before the April 21st CPC meeting, Michael sent materials to City Council members, Steve Magoon, and Watertown Housing Authority Commissioners about the status of the project.

Elodia took exception with the CPC not getting the email communications and project information about Nichols Ave promptly. She found it especially troubling that other entities received the materials before the committee. Elodia also said it was wrong to request the project information without discussing it with the full committee first.

Mark noted there was no deliberation on the project, and he requested information so that the committee could decide how to proceed. Elodia emphasized her main concerns were the environmental conditions on the site, invoking of the Dover amendment, whether the design meets DDS standards and the possibility of seeking a Home Rule Petition to

reduce costs.

Dennis asked about WHA seeking funding for design and whether that would require a new submission in the next cycle. Allen Gallagher said the WHA wouldn't mind resubmitting in the next cycle.

Bob DiRico pointed out the request was now for design and that should require the WHA to submit a new Project Eligibility Form in the next cycle. Jon thought if WHA was willing to submit in the next cycle the CPC didn't need to discuss the project any further.

Mark noted the consensus was the WHA should reapply in the next cycle. However, he thought the environmental materials raised concerns about the history of the site and the current volatile chemicals detected. Mark asked whether placing low-income and disabled residents on the site was environmental injustice. He stated the need for the group home in an urban setting and commended the WHA for trying to meet that need but questioned whether the WHA should reapply for the same site. Elodia agreed with the concerns Mark raised and asked "Is this the right site for this home? It's substandard, it's been polluted, is this the best we can give for this particular population?" Dennis also agreed that this was not the highest and best use to develop this site for a group home and that the developmentally disabled community deserved better. He also mentioned the high cost for the project on a site that didn't have acquisition costs.

Elodia raised the environmental testing was limited to a specific area. She reported that funders hire environmental firms and decide the parameters of the assessment, while the applicant pays for the work. If the site is clean, Elodia would support the project at review before the zoning board. Though she still saw issues with the design and financing.

Jon commented about the process and that the WHA had never made a presentation. While he would entertain a new submission, he advised the CPC to listen and analyze, cautioning against prejudging the project application. In response, Mark said it would be unfair if the CPC didn't raise their concerns ahead of time. Elodia emphasized, first the WHA needed to ensure the site was clean, then deal with zoning, producing a quality design, and seeking a Home Rule Petition to reduce costs.

Matt took issue with the applicant taking it for granted that the project must be publicly bid increasing costs by 20 percent. He thought the applicant should consider doing the project through a non-profit private developer rather than Cambridge Housing Authority.

Councilor Palomba didn't see a problem with paying prevailing wages. He thought the questions raised by the CPC would be helpful to the WHA in preparing a new submission but didn't see the need for submitting a new Project Eligibility form. Councilor Palomba said the WHA took the committee's advice about phasing the project.

Mark clarified that the committee never decided or recommended the WHA phase the project. Though he mentioned the idea at a meeting in January, the CPC never formally advised the applicant and WHA revised their request on their own.

Michael noted the WHA had not officially withdrawn their application and thought an out of cycle funding would be allowable. He was willing to reapply in the next cycle. Michael emphasized the state law required the WHA pay prevailing wages, though seeking Home Rule Petition was possible.

Mark declared that he would like to see that support from members of the disabled community and organizations supporting the disabled community did so in light of the environmental site conditions. Elodia agreed, pointing out the WHA could sell the lot and find a better site to build a home that meets DDS design standards.

Dennis stated he has been pushing for Watertown residents and pushing for housing for Watertown residents.

Susan Falkoff said in her experience with environmental sites, they get cleaned to varying levels depending on usage. She didn't think this site could be cleaned to a standard for residential use and thought the optics for putting developmentally disabled residents on the site were horrible. Susan supported the Chair's comments about environmental injustice.

Mark summarized that the CPC had voiced their concerns about the project, the committee would not consider the project further in this cycle, and the WHA may submit a new application for planning funds in the next funding cycle.

Elodia said a community member suggested that a pocket park could be built on the site to provide something nice for the neighborhood. She also asserted that to avoid future conflict, the Chair needed to ensure any items sent to the CPC should be distributed promptly.

3. **Adjournment**

Motion: Dennis moved to adjourn the meeting and Matt seconded.

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

Adjournment: 8:09PM