

CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MEETING MINUTES
January 28, 2016

City Manager's Office, City Hall
795 Massachusetts Ave.

Trustees Present: Susan Schlesinger, Interim Chair; Peter Daly, Michael Haran, Gwen Noyes, Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli, Bill Tibbs

Trustees Absent: Florrie Darwin, James Stockard

Staff Present: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development; Chris Cotter, Housing Director; Cassie Arnaud, Housing Planner; Anna Dolmatch, Housing Planner; Linda Prosnitz, Housing Planner;

Other Attendees: Andre White; Peter Graham

The meeting was called to order at 4:05.

Upon a motion moved and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes for the meeting of December 16, 2015 as submitted.

PROJECT UPDATE –

Briston Arms – Renovation is ongoing.

463 Cambridge Street - The project was awarded state funds and is waiting to close with DHCD.

Jefferson Park State Public Housing – Construction is underway.

131 Harvard Street/Port Landing – Construction is underway.

Temple Place Apartments – Leasing is underway. The CHA will schedule a ribbon cutting event.

OLD BUSINESS - UPDATES

Inclusionary Zoning Study

Staff hope to send the completed study to the Council in the next few weeks. The goal is to bring it to the second February Council meeting. Trust members asked about discussing the study with the Housing Committee. Staff stated that the committee assignments have not been completed yet.

Trust members expressed concern that the report and recommendations would go to the Council prior to being reviewed by the Trust. Staff stated that although the report would be

sent to the Council, the process of review and discussion would begin when the Council refers the report to the Housing Committee. By the time that meeting occurs, the Trust will have reviewed the report and determined their recommendations. The consultant will also attend the Committee meeting.

Susan Schlesinger stated that she believed that Trust members will be pleased with the report's recommendations. There is not just a number that the report recommends, but a range of other recommendations.

Staff will speak to the Mayor regarding timing when the report is completed. The process for making changes will need to be advertised as required by the zoning process. Trust members recommended that the language for the zoning amendment be drafted in advance as much as possible even without the finalized affordability ratio which will be discussed so that when a City Council recommendation is made, the amendment can be advanced as quickly as possible. Members supported the hiring of a zoning consultant if staff capacity was an issue. Staff confirmed that draft ordinance language can be drafted, advertised, and then amended if the recommendations change. Trust members requested a timeline for the process, working backwards from the target date of implementation of a new ordinance.

Chris Cotter stated that the Inclusionary Study would be an agenda item for the February Trust meeting.

Middle-Income Rental Units

Staff gave an updated on the pilot program of middle-income rental units at 270 Third Street. The rent-up is going slowly. Four of the units are occupied, while other tenants are approved but waiting to view and select units.

Trust members asked about where tenants for these units were coming from. Some had been living with family, while others are in market units. Staff believe that most of them would have to leave Cambridge without this opportunity. While the number of applicants for these units is lower than for moderate-income units, the program is meeting a need.

There are currently approximately 60 moderate-income Inclusionary rental units in process, with a total of 180 projected for this fiscal year. With so many options, applicants will look at multiple units. For the middle-income units, the process has been that when an eligible applicant views a unit, they move forward.

There are additional middle-income units coming at Mass+Main and Kendall Square. Staff will review the Alexandria process to learn more about how best to do middle-income rental units moving forward.

Kendall Square Zoning

The MDX zoning for Kendall Square was passed. The housing requirements include 20 percent low/mod and 5 percent middle-income units; 10 percent of all units must be three-bedroom; and 20 percent of the residential units must be home ownership. Boston Properties will be doing most of the development.

Affordable Housing Zoning Update

Staff presented an update on the ongoing process of looking at potential zoning changes that may increase the ability to create affordable housing. The Trust and the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) met on January 21st and the BZA members were supportive of the idea of an affordable housing zoning overlay.

With the input of affordable housing developers and the Trust, a draft set of standards was developed as a starting point. These ideas were given to Davis Square Architects (DSA) for design feasibility and visualization. Staff continues to work with DSA on modeling different options for density and dimensional standards. Trust members suggested looking at existing buildings that work well in their surroundings and using those as part of the modeling, with a focus on the Residential A and B districts where multi-family is difficult to do under current zoning.

Trust members emphasized how important the visuals will be in discussing potential changes with other stakeholders. Staff stated that they are working to present models on de-identified sites.

Trust members wondered if a 40B style process would be possible, where there is a process for the reviewing boards to approve projects that met a certain criteria. There was some concern that creating a new process for what is likely a small number of projects does not make sense.

Staff stated that one of the goals is to eliminate any appealable events from the process, including permitting board votes. The Trust would still have to approve every development as its funding would be needed. Trust members asked if they would be expected to do the design review. Staff stated that the process could be such that an advisory opinion from the Planning Board would be made to leverage their design expertise.

Susan Schlesinger requested that a subcommittee be convened to talk through some of the issues that are likely to arise and the political considerations. Bill Tibbs noted that the opposition may be very strong among residents in the Residence A and B districts who have not paid any attention to this issue to this point.

Trust members stated that they believe there will be resistance to the proposal no matter how it is modified. Members stated that the Trust should present the zoning and say that this is what we want to do, instead of trying to make it agreeable to everyone because that is impossible. Other Trust members emphasized the importance of visualizing potential density that does not deviate from many non-conforming projects already in the community.

The next steps are to convene a Trust subcommittee to review the work of DSA; explore ideas for the draft zoning proposal; and look at a process for involving other stakeholders.

NEW BUSINESS

Auburn Court Parcel C

Staff updated the Trust on HRI's proposed project to build eight new rental units on Parcel C at Auburn Court. They have applied for a comprehensive permit. The parcel is located across from the garage. The Trust has previously sent support letters to the BZA for affordable housing projects requesting comprehensive permits. Trust members agreed that they would like to do so for this project. Staff will draft and circulate a letter.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

- Meeting Minutes from the Trust's December 16, 2015 meeting.
- Project Update