

CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MEETING MINUTES

September 23, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Conducted virtually via Zoom

Trustees Present via Zoom: Louis DePasquale, Chair; Peter Daly, Florrie Darwin, Elaine DeRosa, Gwen Noyes, Susan Schlesinger, Jim Stockard, Elaine Thorne, Bill Tibbs

Staff Present via Zoom: Iram Farooq, Asst. City Manager for CDD; Chris Cotter, Housing Director; Cassie Arnaud, Senior Housing Planner; Gabby Geller, Housing Development Planner; Janet Haines, Associate Housing Planner; Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison to the City Manager; Emily Salomon, Associate Housing Planner

Others Present via Zoom: Steve Baker, Joseph Bednar, Solomon Birhanie, Michael Brandon, Lee Farris, Clara Fraden, Michael Johnston, A.M. Kubilius, Margaret Moran, Cristopher Moyer, Sue Reinert, James Williamson

The acting chair, Jim Stockard, called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Chris Cotter explained that this meeting of the Affordable Housing Trust would be held virtually pursuant to the temporary emergency orders currently in place, that all votes would be taken by roll call, and that there would be no public comment. Mr. Cotter then coordinated to confirm that each participant was audible to each of the other Trust members.

The Chair, City Manager DePasquale joined the meeting at 4:07 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Upon a motion moved and seconded, with one absent, by roll call of eight in favor and one absent (Mr. DePasquale) to approve the minutes for the meeting of Thursday, August 23, 2021.

UPDATE FROM CDD

HomeBridge: Nine buyers have active commitments and one home is under agreement.

Homeownership Resale Program: Since the last Trust meeting, three units have sold to new homeowners. Additional Resale units are being made available to new buyers under a revised process adopted due to the Pandemic to offer virtual unit tours.

Frost Terrace: Construction is complete and all 40 units have been leased. The permanent loan closing is expected in November 2021.

SquirrelWood: Construction is underway and 90% complete including new and renovated units. All of the new buildings are complete and ready for occupancy. Presently they are being used to house tenants needing relocation during rehab of their units. A lottery for 17 of the 23 new units was held and lease up has started for those units and is anticipated to be completed by mid-October. Other vacancies will be filled through the CHA waitlist. Construction completion is anticipated by November 2021.

2072 Mass Ave.: Capstone/Hope team withdrew their request for a comprehensive permit at the September BZA hearing but remain committed to creating affordable housing at this site and are assessing next steps and options.

52 New St: JAS purchased the site in early 2020 and is proposing to build a 107-unit affordable development through the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO). AHO community meetings have been held and AHO design advisory review by the Planning Board will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

Park View Cooperative: Staff are preparing to close on the loan commitment.

Fresh Pond: Staff are working to finalize the closing of funding in order to finalize the preservation of this 504-unit property. This complex transaction is nearing completion.

Rindge Commons: JAS is working to secure the remaining funding to begin construction, including state funding and new market tax credits.

Inclusionary Housing: The City recorded a restriction on 48 affordable units at Thorndike Street/Court House, which is under construction. Housing Division staff are actively filling rental vacancies, including middle-income units at a new property, Prism.

OTHER UPDATES

Incentive Zoning: The City Council passed a policy order to increase the contribution rate from the current rate of \$20.31 to \$33.34. This order was referred to and will be discussed by the Housing Committee.

Community Preservation Act (CPA) Public Hearings: The City Council has approved the recommendation from the CPA committee to allocate 80% of FY22 funds to the Trust, an allocation of \$14 million which brings the total amount of City funds allocated to the Trust in FY22 to \$32.4 million.

Cherry Street: A second public meeting will be held tonight to discuss ideas for creating housing on the site.

City Council Committees: The Housing Committee met to discuss a proposed condominium conversion ordinance. A draft was passed on to city council for discussion.

JEFFERSON PARK FEDERAL FUNDING REQUEST

The Trust continued its discussion from the August 2021 Trust meeting regarding the request from the Cambridge Housing Authority for up to \$43,611,615 to assist with the comprehensive modernization of the CHA's Jefferson Park Federal development which will involve the demolition of the existing buildings and the new construction of 277 affordable units to replace the 175 units currently at the site.

The conversation began with a review of a memo prepared by City staff in response to the discussion at the last Trust meeting which provided a comparison of the density of the proposed Jefferson Park Federal redevelopment to other affordable housing developments in Cambridge.

City staff then introduced the Trust to from the Cambridge Housing Authority who had been invited to attend the meeting to provide a presentation on the revitalization plans. Some of the key points from the presentation included:

- The proposed redevelopment will involve the complete rebuilding of the 175 existing affordable units, including the 57 units which have been taken off-line due to deteriorated conditions, and adding more than 100 new affordable units.
- The site will be redesigned with a layout to better integrate the housing into the surrounding neighborhood.
- The new buildings will be constructed to Passive House standards.
- The density of Jefferson Park Federal will be similar or less than other comparably sized CHA developments (floor area ratio of 1.2, comparable to Jackson Gardens).
- There has been a concerted effort to engage resident participation in the redevelopment planning process.

Ms. Fraden and other CHA staff described the process working with residents to generate input into the design and planning process, which began several years ago in traditional resident meeting format. By the end of 2020, CHA used a hybrid approach through open phone hours to make staff available for feedback, virtual resident meetings, outdoor table sessions during summer months, and resident newsletters that were translated in multiple languages. CHA staff estimated 70% of residents had participated in some way.

In response to questions from several Trust members regarding indoor community spaces within the apartment buildings, CHA staff said that there will be one large community room and a smaller resident lounge in one of new buildings. They said that they are trying to accommodate more resident lounges in the other elevated buildings if space allows, balancing the need for housing units with desire for common space.

Several Trust members also asked about the outdoor community spaces. CHA staff walked Trust members through the different open spaces being created, each which will have different types of programming. One courtyard will have private decks, with grills in the center of courtyard; and one courtyard will have playground. CHA staff said that in addition to the new green spaces being created, the proposed street grid design will also increase social spaces and informal interactions as neighbors pass each other in and out of their homes.

Trust members asked CHA staff to explain cost estimates for the Jefferson Park Revitalization. CHA cited a few reasons for high construction costs: a premium to build to Passive House standards, central A/C in all the apartments, increased square footage of family sized units, and a rise in construction inflation as well as construction cost increases attributable to COVID-19. Although the per square foot construction costs are comparable to other developments, the site and infrastructure costs increase the overall project costs, which were underestimated early in the planning stages.

Mr. Johnston, emphasized the long-term maintenance plan and the robust landscape team that will focus on JP Federal's open spaces and tree care. Mr. Johnson explained that over the last decade, the CHA has repositioned itself to ensure the properties have sufficient reserves are not reliant on congressional appropriations. For example, CHA has done 20% onsite energy production and hope JP Fed will be almost net zero and not use fossil fuels.

The CHA is working to assemble the final pieces of financing, including \$10 million in DHCD funding, with an anticipated construction start date of August 2022.

Florrie Darwin left the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Peter Daly left the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

After a lengthy discussion, Trust members voted on the proposed funding request. Upon a motion moved and seconded, with Mr. Daly, Ms. Darwin absent, and Ms. DeRosa abstaining, by roll call of six in favor, two absent, and one abstaining, it was:

VOTED: to approve the Cambridge Housing Authority's request for up to \$43,611,615 for the revitalization of Jefferson Park Federal as outlined in more detail in the Trust's September 2021 briefing materials.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion moved and seconded, Mr. Daly, Ms. Darwin absent, by roll call of seven in favor and two absent, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:19 pm

The next meeting is scheduled for October 28, 2021.

Materials:

- Agenda
- Meeting Minutes from the Trust's August 25, 2021 meeting
- Project update: Status of Active Commitments
- Community Development Department Memo September 23, 2021: Jefferson Park Federal Funding Request
- Community Development Department Memo August 25, 2021; Revised September 23, 2021: Jefferson Park Federal Funding Request
- Cambridge Housing Authority PowerPoint Presentation to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust September 23, 2021: Revitalization of Jefferson Park Federal