

CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MEETING MINUTES
September 28, 2017

Ackerman Room, Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Ave.

Trustees Present: Louis DePasquale, Chair; Peter Daly, Florrie Darwin, Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli, Bill Tibbs; Gwen Noyes, Jim Stockard, Elaine Thorne

Trustees Absent: Susan Schlesinger

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

Others Present: Elaine DeRosa

The meeting was called to order at 4:10pm

Upon a motion moved and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes for the meeting of Wednesday, August 23, 2017 as submitted.

Before beginning the meeting, Chris Cotter introduced Janet Haines, the City's new Associate Housing Planner, which is a position that is being funded by the Trust. Trust members introduced themselves and welcomed Janet.

PROJECT UPDATES

Vail Court – staff informed the Trust that there was no new update since the last updated shared; the City continues to wait to hear back from the Court on the filings submitted; the second public meeting anticipated to be held in September has been postponed until there is more clarity regarding the pending legal action by the former owner.

Porter Square- Capstone is preparing to begin the permitting process, following a community process where they discussed their plans to build a 43 unit development. Will incorporate feedback as they refine design and development plans.

Concord Ave. – project was denied funding in last funding round but has been invited by DHCD to participate in a special funding round currently underway. See detailed project update below. There was a brief discussion regarding the fact that the availability of new state funding relies on the successful passing of the bond bill. Trust members asked to be informed of opportunities to advocate for the bond bill, if helpful.

Jefferson Park – construction is behind schedule but still on track for occupancy in late 2017 into early 2018.

Harvard Bedrick – renovations underway at several units at this scattered-site development

Homebridge– seeing significant uptick in interest in this FTHB program since it was renamed and expanded, including among households over 100%. First HomeBridge applicant has had an offer accepted and 8-10 additional buyers are approved and looking for units.

Inclusionary Housing Program– pipeline remains strong with several large developments soon to be under covenant. The Trust noted that this appears to confirm that recent ordinance changes have not deterred new development.

Fresh Pond update – staff continue to work with owner on preservation plan. Owner was invited to recent tenant association meeting where he met with a well-attended group of residents and shared the anticipated framework of a preservation approach.

Linwood Court/Squirrel Brand Consolidation

Staff provided a brief update on a second portfolio consolidation underway by Just A Start. Staff noted that JAS has been working to preserve and extend affordability at Linwood Court and are simultaneously looking at ways to add new units through an infill development there. At the same time, JAS is reviewing the needs of Squirrel Brand Apartments which will be approaching the end of its tax credit compliance period.

JAS's current plan involves the new construction of three new buildings at Linwood Court. JAS introduced the idea to its residents earlier this year and has since held several community meetings to discuss the concept with the broader neighborhood. Staff noted that part of the impetus for consolidating sites and creating new units is to better accommodate the housing needs of its residents, including those who are over-housed. As a result, JAS is proposing that the new infill housing include smaller units, including one-bedrooms, in order to help them “right-size” the housing of their residents. Staff said that JAS is in the process of refining its design and development scenarios, with an intention of beginning the zoning process in the coming months. Staff expect to bring a request for financing to the Trust once the scope and details are fully reviewed. Trust members expressed their support for the concept noting that it was a creative way to add units and free up family-sized units.

Trust members asked for an update on Trust finances at upcoming meeting, to better understand resources available to commit to new developments and programs.

675 Concord Avenue Update

Peter Daly left the room for the duration of this discussion item.

In advance of bringing a request for permanent financing to the Trust next month, staff provided a brief update on the status of Homeowner's Rehab Inc's 671-675 Concord Avenue development. In March 2016, the Trust committed acquisition and predevelopment funding to enable HRI to purchase this one-acre parcel of land on Concord Avenue. Since that time, HRI has purchased the property, demolished the existing structures, cleared the site, and secured zoning approval to construct 98 affordable units. Staff noted that this development will be the largest 100% affordable new construction project Cambridge has seen in many decades. It was also noted that given its size the project will require substantial amounts of subsidy funding. However, despite some challenges with the site, it appears that the final budget will be in line with what was anticipated when the project was first introduced to the Trust last year.

Trust members expressed continued support for the project while also expressing concerns over the total development cost. It was suggested that a group be convened to look at what is driving affordable housing development costs and determine if there are opportunities for cost reductions. Among the ideas raised was modular construction which could be among a range of innovative ways to lower the cost of building new affordable housing.

Envision Cambridge update

Peter Daly returned to the meeting.

Staff provided the Trust with an update on the Citywide planning process, including an overview of recent discussions of the Envision Cambridge housing working group. Staff noted that there appeared to be lots of support for new affordable housing production, as well as a zoning overlay for affordable housing. Staff noted that the working group has assembled a range of housing-related goals which are now available for public comment and review. The next housing working group meeting will be scheduled for later in the fall, where the working group members will continue to refine actions and strategies in implementing the goals. Staff invited the Trust to take a look at a new document prepared by the consultant team called *Cambridge Today* which provides an in depth overview of the city, as well as on-line engagement tools and materials. Members of the public can use the on-line tools to rank as well as add comments on the pros and cons of each goal.

Incentive Zoning Ordinance

Before adjourning the meeting, it was noted that the date of the meeting fell on the second anniversary of the adoption of the incentive zoning ordinance change, and that on this anniversary of the adoption of the changes in 2015, the rate would be increased to \$14.50.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 26, 2017 at 4:00 p.m.

- Meeting Minutes from the Trust's August 23, 2017 meeting.
- Project Update
- 675 Concord Ave – Update memo
- Squirrelwood – Update memo