

CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST  
MEETING MINUTES  
November 29, 2017

Ackerman Room, Cambridge City Hall  
795 Massachusetts Ave.

Trustees Present: Louis DePasquale, Chair; Peter Daly; Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli; Susan Schlesinger; William Tibbs

Trustees Absent: Florrie Darwin, Gwen Noyes; James Stockard; Elaine Thorne;

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

Others Present: E. Denise Simmons, Mayor

The meeting was called to order at 4:07.

Upon a motion moved and seconded, it was voted

VOTED: To approve the minutes for the meeting of Thursday, October 26, 2017, as submitted.

## **PROJECT UPDATE**

**Jefferson Park State Public Housing** – Construction is almost complete.

**Concord Ave** – HRI is waiting to hear from DHCD about their application for state funding in the October special mini-round.

**Porter Square** – All sites have been required. Site eligibility for 40B was submitted to the state. Project will be heard by the Planning Board in December and then the ZBA.

**HomeBridge Program** – One unit has closed and a second is scheduled to close.

**Inclusionary Program** - With the approval of Mass & Main, more than 1,000 inclusionary units have been approved. There are now 1,048 approved inclusionary units. Staff is preparing a campaign, which will last several months and culminate in the spring, to mark the milestone. The campaign will use the testimonials of tenants and owners impacted by the program.

Trust discussed 55 Wheeler Street which is at the Planning Board. The project will potentially have 100 inclusionary units. The issues being discussed are concerns about traffic and flood plain, the planned traffic flow through Fawcett Street, and the possibility of sharing open space. The project may contain both ownership and rental units. The

Trust discussed sending a letter to the Planning Board about their support of projects that will create affordable housing, however not having reviewed the Wheeler Street project did not want it to be specific to that project.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1791 Mass. Ave.**

Staff updated the Trust on the status of this development, specifically the pending request for a comprehensive permit that is now being reviewed. The developer has requested approval to build 40 new affordable units in Porter Square. This request will be discussed but the Planning Board and heard by the Board of Zoning Appeal next month. The developers have conducted a process to review their proposal which has gone well. Residents from across the city have come out to support the project. The Trust will send a letter of support to the BZA.

### **Mayor's Comprehensive Housing Plan**

The Housing Committee held a meeting in October to discuss the Mayor's Comprehensive Housing Plan. Several Trust members attended that meeting, and staff and Trust members reported on the meeting. It was noted that some items, such as supportive housing for homeless, will be added and that additional data is also needed.

The Trust then discussed the Mayor's plan. Some of the issues raised in the plan are the need for additional funding, potential zoning changes, including housing overlay districts and inclusionary units in existing buildings. Other areas discussed were housing for homeless, the Central Square parking lots, the balance between commercial and residential development and assistance for tenants at-risk of displacement in the city.

Some of the proposed changes would require a Home Rule petition. It was noted that Boston and Somerville are also talking about Home Rule petitions. There are efforts at promoting regional cooperation underway. Some caution was expressed that only a limited number of Home Rule petitions should be pursued at once.

Some of the Mayor's plan mirrors what is being discussed in the Envision Cambridge process where the Housing Working Group is discussing many of these ideas. Items will need to be prioritized and those with the most impact should have the highest priority.

Reducing barriers and achieving higher density - The Trust discussed ways to reduce barriers to new developments and create support for affordable housing projects. Transparency and working with the community is critical. A project should be presented with good visuals and detailed design so people can understand it. There is also a need to communicate what is feasible. A small group could work on modeling density and how to communicate this.

Permitting - Other issues to continue discussing are expedited permitting and/or by right permitting.

Incentive Zoning – The Zoning Ordinance requires that the incentive study be started no less than three years from the time the Ordinance was last amended. The revisions to the incentive provisions were passed in September 2015. City staff will soon begin the process of preparing for the next Incentive Study.

Inclusive Planning - The Trust also discussed another aspect of the Mayor’s plan – how to create an inclusive planning process to increase the participation of underrepresented communities, including lower income tenants, families who experience homelessness and people for who English is not their first language. There are programs which focus on training lower income households to serve on municipal committees. The City could look at the composition of current commissions and committees and conduct outreach and provide training to promote inclusivity. In addition to promoting board memberships, more general participation by underrepresented groups should be encouraged. Participation needs to be inclusive to represent issues from a variety of viewpoints.

**Mass & Main**

The discussion of the distribution of units for Mass & Main will be discussed at the next Trust meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 PM

Materials:

- Meeting Minutes from the Trust’s October 26, 2017 meeting.
- Project Update
- Mayor’s Comprehensive Housing Plan
- Draft Letter of Support to BZA 1971 Massachusetts Ave. and 2 Frost Terrace
- Mass & Main Inclusionary Unit Selection Memo