

Multi-Board Affordable Housing Meeting Minutes- April 4, 2022

Remote Meeting for:

Select Board

Planning Board

Affordable Housing Trust

Zoning Board of Appeals

Due to the Governor's Order that allows remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting is being held remotely via the Zoom platform and being recorded, broadcasted, and live streamed by WACA-TV.

Brandi Kinsman from the Select Board called the Multi-Board meeting to order at 7:02pm and asked participating boards to open up their respective meetings.

- Joe Magnani called the Select Board meeting to order and took attendance by rollcall- Rob Scherer, Steve Mitchell, Yolanda Greaves, Brandi Kinsman, Joe Magnani.

- Tricia Kendall called the Planning Board meeting to order and took attendance by rollcall- Deepa Venkat, Anna Tesminisky, Marcelo Arjona, Tricia Kendall.

- Steve Greenberg called the Affordable Housing Trust to order and took attendance by rollcall- Steve Greenberg, Alan Galiwango, Joe Magnani, David Rosenblum, Barbra Segesigundo

- John Trefethen called the Zoning Board of Appeals to order and took attendance by rollcall- Brian Forestal, Anton Tikhomirov, John Trefethan.

Joining the meeting Michael Herbert, Town Manager, Emma Snellings, Assistant Town Planner, as well as Alex Koppleman and Alexis Smith from MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) who had worked with the Housing Production Plan Steering Committee on the HPP and the Inclusionary Zoning bylaw.

Brandi thanked everyone for making the time to discuss the complex issue of affordable housing. This meeting's goal is to understand the big picture of affordable housing, ask questions of the different boards, and begin to decide directionally of next steps. Citizens comments and questions will be held to the end. Part of the discussion will include Inclusionary Zoning but Brandi is recommending that we pull it from the May Town Meeting in order to allow further review and discussion for November Town Meeting.

Brandi presented the slides with data from the Affordable Housing needs analysis that MAPC conducted at the beginning of the Housing Production Plan project in 2020. This includes housing affordability in Ashland and the Area Median Income (AMI) for our region. Affordable housing is for seniors, teachers, police officers, firefighters- not considered low-income housing.

Emma Snellings presented slides on the state's priorities around housing. Fewer houses have been built since 1990 and shortage of housing is state-wide. It's a disadvantage compared to other states and so state has created incentive programs. Ashland is a Housing Choice Community, producing a certain percentage of housing stock and gives the town access to grant programs. Ashland's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is the moderate income housing as a percentage of total housing stock. Ashland's current SHI is 9.1% but once census data is included by the state, it will be 7.9%. Less than 10% makes a community subject to 40B process, where there is a waiver on local zoning regulations. Ashland is

currently in Safe Harbor from 40B because of our recently certified Housing Production Plan.

Rob Scherer asked if we could get Ashland-specific stats on housing built before 1960 and from 1990-present and also asked if we could consider housing projects in current pipeline.

Michael Herbert said 33 affordable units would give us an increase of 0.5% of SHI (1 year safe harbor). 100 Chestnut would be 176 total, 18 affordable units (10%)- no progress towards safe harbor. 501 Pond Street proposed added affordable units combined with 100 Chestnut may get us 1 year safe harbor. First time in safe harbor- developer 500 unit development off Cherry Street, successfully stave off 40B threat. In 2021, 260 unit development across from HS wanted to come in, but we were also in safe harbor so not able to put in 40B application.

Steve Mitchell asked how SHI percentage managed. Michael said based on census every 10 years. If we would hit 10%, it would hold until next census.

Deepa asked safe harbor when permitted or constructed? Based on 40B comprehensive permit issued, but construction needs to happen in a year or units are recinded until occupancy permit is issued. We come out of safe harbor when census is recalculated every 10 years or if we haven't built requisite number of units to maintain safe harbor.

Steve Greenberg presented Affordable Housing Trust slides, including purpose of the trust, accomplishments of the trust, and funding mechanisms. Ideas that the AHT has been talking about: purchasing deed restrictions for additional projects, ADU bylaw update, deed-restricted rental units payment assistance.

Rob asked if ADU would count towards SHI. Alex Koppleman from MAPC, naturally occurring affordable housing, but very tough to make it deed-restricted.

Brandi asked about funding mechanism for AHT. CPA funds in affordable housing bucket that can be utilized if substantial project, would request more CPA funds at Town Meeting. AHT potentially offer deeper affordability in our projects? Yes, AHT could potentially do that.

Brandi presented SB perspective. When there is a development agreement, been able to negotiate 25% affordable. Discuss use of town properties- Sibson property and 2nd lot of Robert Hill Way specifically for affordable housing development.

Joe Magnani said that Habitat for Humanity could be a willing partner, specifically for Sibson property. AHT will review for discussion. Rob Scherer would prefer using Sibson property rather than Robert Hill Way. David Rosenblum said Habitat great organization and can get to the 30% affordability level. Would recommend pursuing Sibson property for this.

Brandi reviewed Housing Production Plan process from fall 2020 to adoption by Planning Board and Select Board in Spring 2021. The HPP does not advocate for more development in general, but rather creating a plan for affordable housing so we have more control of the development. Reviewed goals and priorities created in HPP.

Brandi described what is Inclusionary Housing- a policy which would make a percentage of affordable housing in any development. This includes apartments, condos, and single family homes. Included in developing IZ needs to include some incentives to the developer, like reduction in parking or density bonus, to make the project financially feasible for developer to offer affordable housing. Brandi went through the process that the HPP Committee went through with MAPC to develop the IZ bylaw for Ashland. Ashland felt that offering deeper affordability was important as well as offering affordable units to count toward SHI. Brandi described the IZ bylaw that the HPP Committee developed with the assistance of MAPC.

Marcelo wants to make sure we keep big picture in mind. Good planning will ensure affordable housing, including staying in Safe Harbor and need Comprehensive Plan. Rob has reservations about IZ applying to entire town- asked if other towns have used overlay districts rather than town-wide?

Alex Koppleman from MAPC in 140 cities and towns are all town-wide- best practice for cities and towns. Benefits to town-wide can create affordable opportunities throughout town and is more equitable. HPP and IZ were part of one planning process, although town prioritized HPP first.

Anna presented Burlington, VT model where wealthier areas do not allow in lieu of payments for housing (less inclusive areas). Asked Alex Koppleman if MA has done something similar. Alex said model was reflective of Ashland. Alexis Smith used proforma information to determine if projects would work. MAPC took lots of data options and that was informing Ashland's feasibility. No city or town in MA tiers requirements (except for Boston), except for project size. Anna asked if developers who are specialized in affordable housing explore in Ashland. Alexis explained those mission-based developers/organizations get funding from state/federal government and costs 350k-400k in subsidy (20-30 a year in the state) and takes approximately 5 years to build affordable housing project.

Yolanda said more tools in toolbox is important and elected officials have been talking about affordable housing for years and important to keep the public engagement this summer and need range of affordable options.

Tricia IZ bylaw wouldn't change underlying zoning- it stays in place.

Steve asked about MBTA Communities and zoning requirements. Alexis and Alex said no affordable component to that requirement but if we had IZ in place it would ensure that affordable units would be built. Rob said IZ would affect overlay districts.

Mark Dassoni asked about form-based code, Sibson property, what happened after 2015 Comprehensive Plan failed, AMI for retired people.

Julie Nardone said impediment to 10% that it has to be new and that we have naturally affordable housing and should convert existing properties.

Jon Fetherston says Sibson property should be explored. It will be hard for seniors to age in Ashland. And we should make sure we create housing for people instead of just hitting 10%.

Helen Nickole asked how it gets decided which town properties get used. Alex said typically it would be a public process and be able to request specific requests (RFP) for town property. Michael said land disposition would require Town Meeting vote.

Steve Morgan against parking reductions and does not want to give more money to AHT.

Kate Jurczyk needs more public input but how do we balance IZ with Comprehensive Plan. Financial analysis is only geared toward multi-family.

Joan Gonfrade asked how do we ensure that affordable units go to Ashland residents and employees first. Concerned about the incentives in IZ and not allowing huge projects to come in.

Next steps include more public discussion on IZ., ADU bylaw, and the AHT exploring uses for specific town properties.

Yolanda made motion to adjourn Select Board, Rob second to adjourn. Vote taken 5-0.

Tricia made motion to adjourn Planning Board, Anna second. Vote taken 4-0.

Steve Greenberg made motion to adjourn Affordable Housing Trust, Joe Mangani second, Vote 5-0.

Brian Forestal made motion to adjourn for ZBA, Anton second. Vote 3-0

Meeting closed at 9:04pm