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Burlington Housing Partnership Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2023, via Webex

Committee Members Present:

Kerry Donahue (KD), Chair
Eileen Sickler (ES), Vice-Chair
Henry Wu (HW), Secretary
Michael Runyan (MR)
Rita Shah (RS)
Toni Ann Natola (TN)

Other Attendees:

Drew Merrill (DM), Liz Bonventre (LB), Martin Collins (MC),
John Danizio (JD), Shari Ellis (SE), Jennifer Goldsmith (JG), Alex
Koppelman (AK), Barbara L'Heureux (BL), Gary Litchfield (GL),
Monte Pearson (MP), Adam Senesi (AS), John Strauss (JS)

- KD called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.
- **Housing Production Plan** – KD noted that the BHPC has completed the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). One of the options resulting from the HNA is the conduct of a Housing Production Plan (HPP). Mr. Alex Koppelman (AK) from the MAPC was invited to provide more insight on a HPP. AK presented an overview of the HPP to highlight how a HPP can be utilized to identify and address housing needs in the community through a HNA. AK also provided insight on how the HPP can be utilized to influence housing developments and ensure the town is compliant with Chapter 40B housing requirements. AK noted that although Burlington is over the 10% threshold required by the State for affordable housing, the actual deed restricted housing stock is much lower at just over 5%. The HPP consists of three (3) elements – 1) Housing Needs Assessment; 2) Development Constraints and Opportunities; and 3) Goals and Strategies. The town has already completed the HNA this past summer to assess future population and housing needs. The Development Constraints and Opportunities element evaluates infrastructural, environmental, and other constraints on development to identify suitable areas for housing development and growth. The Goals and Strategies element provides corresponding strategies to fulfill the housing needs. AK presented examples of other towns' Development Constraints and Opportunities as well as Goals and Strategies contained in those towns' HPP. AK discussed the formality of a HPP and the need for it to be certified by the State. Since Burlington is above the 10% threshold for 40B compliance, he suggested that a different kind of planning effort might be more fitting for Burlington.

KD asked AK to clarify point on working with the community in developing the HPP and how inputs are collected. AK stated that it would be up to the BHPC to decide on how community inputs are gathered and can be similar to what BHPC did in collecting inputs for the HNA through public forum surveys. As for who MAPC typically works with in developing the HPP, they typically work as with the community staff or Affordable Housing Trust. The town's committee working the HPP usually would have representation from the Planning Board and Select Board since these boards would ultimately have to vote to adopt. In order for the HPP to be eligible for State certification, it would need the Planning Board and Select Board to be engaged throughout the process given that the HPP is looking at development constraints and opportunities. The MAPC would also hold focus groups with Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and any other boards that are involved in reviewing town development. The MAPC would also typically bring in the community's development partners and/or regional developers into those discussions to weigh in on regulations that will be encountered in trying to fulfill the HPP vision.

ES asked whether there is redundancy between the HPP and the Town's Master Plan. LB responded that the Master Plan is at a very high level and the HPP is more in depth. AK added that he believes the Master Plan is looking at housing, economic development, and transportation, and how these items relate to each other at a very high level. The HPP would dive deeper and would coordinate with the Master Plan. The HPP and Master Plan should be in alignment. AK stated that the communities that he has worked with typically have both a HPP and Master Plan. AK further stated that there are benefits for having a certified HPP. ES asked AK to elaborate on the benefits. AK responded that having a certified HPP allows the town to be eligible for Housing Choice Grants. The grants can be used for capital improvements and streetscape improvements.

MR commented that a HPP in coordination with MBTA communities' planning would make sense since we would not want two conflicting documents. If the BHPC is to go forward with a HPP, he would like to see the committee coordinate closely with the Planning Board.

ES asked about approximate cost to conduct a HPP. AK stated that the HPP costs for the example towns in the presentation were around \$40K - \$60K. AK stated that Burlington has already conducted the HNA so the cost would be very different.

KD asked AK about impediments that towns have encountered in developing a HPP and whether towns have successfully implemented their HPP. AK responded that the biggest challenge is actually identifying sites where housing development should go since it requires a lot of buy-in. AK stated that there are ways to encourage development but ultimately it would depend on the private property owners unless the town chooses to develop a publicly owned property. With regards to implementation and successes, AK noted that he has seen some HPPs that contained too many different strategies and became overwhelming. Successful plans are usually more strategic and targeted that are focused on a specific timeframe. AK stated the example HPPs in the presentation all had their strategies implemented. HPPs are designed to look at the near future unlike a Master Plan that looks long term.

- **Grandview Farms** – John Danizio (JD) informed the committee that there a 2BR unit and a 1BR unit that is now available. The town has all the documentations and keys for the units. He also reported that two more families have notified that family members have passed away and those units will also soon be available. The town is currently working with Liz Rust to update the application that was used for the last unit with the current units' specific information. JD stated that the applications will be shared with those that responded to the last application as well as those that didn't to just let them know of the availability of the units.

RS asked about the price of the units. JD responded that given the increase in interest rates, the price of the units has come down. JD wasn't sure of the exact prices since he didn't have the applications with him, but recalls that the 2BR is about \$241K and the 1BR is \$119K.

There was discussion on list of potential applicants. JD mentioned that the town had a list that was in existence for quite a while and had been updated a couple of times when the town reached out to the waitlisters to see if they were still interested in remaining on the list. For the last unit, the town did some marketing and accepted any applications that were received but found few who were actually eligible. JD noted that asset limitations was not an issue but income limitations was the stumbling block because the master deed or regulatory agreement for the property had an 80% median income level. The town had to utilize the 80% threshold first and can only go above when no one meets that threshold.

Also discussed was handling of waitlisters who refused an unit or didn't respond when the unit was offered. Previously in these instances, that person gets moved to the bottom of the list and after three (3) times, the person gets removed from the list. JD stated that it is now a lottery system so it is much simpler.

- **119 S. Bedford** – JD provided update on getting the property renovated and sold. The town's purchasing and the facilities group is now helping out with the property. The purchasing team is working the RFP for renovations and wanted specifications for building material to be included in the RFP. The facilities group is working on the specifications to be used. Targeting to get the RFP package to procurement by week of 15 Jan 2023. The RFP will include a mandatory site visit for the prospective contractors to look at the property to see what needs to be done and identify any missed items in the RFP. Will need to reconvene and decide on renovations once the contractors provide cost estimates.
- **Winn View Heights II** – KD opened the discussion by noting that the Select Board met again on 9 Jan 2023 and heard from Gary Litchfield and Tom Murphy regarding the project. MR provided summary of the Select Board discussion. He noted that the Board members and Mountain Road neighbors went over concerns with the proposed project. MR didn't believe it was a productive discussion since it just basically rehashed concerns raised at the first Select Board meeting and was just soliciting comments from people in attendance.

MR reminded the committee that the mission of the BHPC is to consider housing needs in Burlington with particular attention to housing opportunities that are affordable to all income levels and abilities. Furthermore, BHPC seeks to expand the affordable housing inventory and make recommendations to the Select Board in taking steps to support creation of affordable housing options.

The committee wanted to be able to make an informed decision on whether to advise the Select Board to write a Letter of Support for the project. Committee members voiced their concerns with the project and whether it is in the best interest of the town and residents. These concerns revolved around locale of the proposed senior housing and the ease of accessibility. TN wanted to take neighboring residents' thoughts on the project into consideration.

After much discussion, ES made a motion to have the BHPC motion of support for the Winn View Heights II project, with reservations as it meets BHPC goals of expanding affordable housing stock, be read into the next Select Board meeting on 23 January 2023. The reservations encompasses 1) locale not ideal for seniors; 2) there is no available local transportation; 3) it is not a walkable area; and 4) to ensure the development is safe and appropriate for seniors, that the Zoning Board of Appeals obtain guidance from the Planning department, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission. RS seconded the motion. KD, ES, RS, MR, and HW voted "Yes" on the motion and TN abstained. The motion for support passed 5-0-1.

- **Minutes** – RS made motion to approve the 13 & 20 December 2022 meeting minutes. MR seconded the motion. KD, ES, MR, RS, TN, and HW all voted "Yea". The 13 & 20 December 2022 minutes were approved 6-0-0.
- **Next Meeting** – the next meeting will be Jan 24, 2023 at 5:00 PM.
- **Adjourned** – the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm.
- **Minutes Approved** – On 24 January 2023, RS made motion to approve the 10 January 2023 meeting minutes. MR seconded the motion. KD, ES, MR, RS, and HW all voted "Yea". The 10 January 2023 minutes were approved 5-0-0.
- **Respectfully Submitted,**
Henry Wu, Secretary