



Received by
Clerk's Office:
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Burlington Housing Partnership Committee Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2021 via Cisco Webex

Committee Members Present: Mike Runyan, Chair
Ernie Covino, Vice Chair
Kerry Donahue, Secretary
Rita Shah
Henry Wu

Committee Members Not Present: Charles Viveiros, Bob Young

Other Attendees: Whitney Haskell (Town of Burlington), Joe Compercio, Eileen Sickler, Shari Ellis

- Mike Runyan called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm
- Mike Runyan welcomed new Committee member Rita Shah; committee members and guests introduced themselves to Rita, who indicated that she is a social worker, runs a nonprofit, and has worked with the Arlington Housing Authority. She and her large extended family have lived in Burlington for 30+ years, and she's excited to join the Committee.

Municipal Housing Trust

- Mike Runyan introduced Whitney Haskell, who gave a presentation on what a Municipal Housing Trust is, what it can do, and next steps. Whitney will share her slides with the Committee.
- Mike Runyan indicated Burlington has about \$1 million in its housing fund that hasn't been used, eager to use it.
- Rita Shah shared information about the HUD Continuum of Care program, which Burlington could apply for (Arlington has been using). Burlington is part of Balance of State.
- Eileen Sickler asked how compliance for the Trust works, are taxes due to the state, fed, etc.; Whitney unsure.
- Kerry Donahue asked about the status of pursuing the Community Preservation Act in Burlington. Shari Ellis noted a group in town is currently assessing when they will put it on the next town meeting; it will be a ballot initiative on a future election.
- Ernie Covino thinks trust sounds like good idea, that people in town would appreciate transparency, suggests we vote on it.

- Henry Wu noted that the MHP document indicates the Trust has members that only serve for 2 years; Mike Runyan notes it's likely a 2 year appointment but members could likely be reappointed. Would need clarification.
- Kerry Donahue asked why establishing a Trust was voted down at a previous town meeting; MHP's recommendation to mount a campaign to get buy-in from community makes passing this at Town Meeting more likely and Kerry is concerned we wouldn't have time to do so before May Town Meeting. Mike indicated that last time, it was bundled with purchasing 117 S. Bedford, was hastily thrown together and at Town Meeting the 117 S. Bedford house purchase was approved, Trust was not.
- Kerry Donahue indicated perhaps best next step is to have someone from MassHousing Partnership speak to us, answer our many questions. Kerry Donahue made motion to do this, Ernie Covino seconded, unanimously passed.
- Mike Runyan will notify town administrator, let them know this is in the works, maybe have someone present idea at May Town Meeting, and have it on the agenda in September, and will work to schedule a meeting with MHP.

Old Business/New Business

- **Accessible dwelling units:** Ernie reported that ZBRC discussed the issue of how in-law apartments in town can be converted into accessory dwelling units extensively last night. A lot of in-law apartments being turned into income-generating units. Shari Ellis noted that the current bylaws make it very difficult to convert them safely, but ZBRC can't make policy on this.
- Shari clarified difference between in-laws and ADUs (in-laws typically have no real division between home and apartment, ADU needs to have fire walls, egress, etc.).
- Kerry Donahue noted how many there are in her neighborhood, and they don't affect "neighborhood character" – you can't tell they are there. Also, some people with unused in-law apartments used to Airbnb them but since the Town banned Airbnb's, perhaps they need a way to convert them into monthly rentals.
- Shari Ellis noted the Building Department's main concern is safety; Kerry Donahue asked if perhaps future Trust funds could be used to help people make the conversions (install firewalls, etc). Mike Runyan noted fire department challenges for sure; they arrive and don't know where entrances are, more people living in basements.
- Ernie Covino will bring this issue up to planning board next week.
- Rita Shah noted that if we could have more 2-family homes it would be helpful for young couples, etc. because housing is so expensive in Burlington. Young families cannot afford \$600,000 starter homes.
- Mike Runyan noted that we should keep this on our agenda to continue discussing/researching.
- **Affordable Housing Inventory:** Kerry Donahue still working on inventory spreadsheet.
- **Housing Choice Designation:** Just before tonight's meeting, Mike Runyan shared that Burlington is one of only about 65 communities with a Housing Choice Designation, which means we can get certain grants, etc. Need to research.

- **117 S. Bedford Street Property:** Mike Runyan gave an update: painting is done, flooring on Monday, then kitchen cabinets, etc., outside work will need to be done.
- Mike Runyan noted that the Seven Springs unit went to young family of 3 (couple with one child) who were thrilled to purchase it. Unfortunately, the first family whose name was drawn from was a family of 5, which was too big for the unit. Hopefully the family will apply for 117 S. Bedford.
- Kerry Donahue asked about the adjacent home on S. Bedford; Mike Runyan noted the family at 119 S. Bedford thought they might sell a few months ago but haven't heard anything from them. HPC would get right of first approval to purchase and sell the home as affordable housing.
- Mike Runyan will reach out to Town Administrator and Whitney tomorrow, let them know Committee would like to have a meeting with MHP to learn more about forming a Trust, then we'll schedule that and/or the April HPC meeting.
- Ernie made motion to approve the February 2021 Minutes, seconded by Rita Shah, approved unanimously.
- Mike Runyan adjourned meeting at 7pm.