



**Burlington Housing Partnership Committee
Meeting Minutes**

May 27, 2021 via Cisco Webex

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

Committee Members Not Present: Charles Viveiros, Henry Wu

Other Attendees: Whitney Haskell (Town of Burlington), Kristin Kassner and Liz Bonventre (Planning Dept.), John Strauss

- Mike Runyan called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm

Housing Needs Assessment & Municipal Housing Trust

- Mike Runyan & Kerry Donahue gave a summary of meeting with MAPC and how a Housing Needs Assessment works
- Mike would like to put a placeholder in September town meeting to get approval to spend funds on the Housing Needs Assessment
- Kerry will share materials MAPC sent with everyone
- Cost of needs assessment are very reasonable, could even be some grant money we could use
- Bob Young asked how long assessment takes (about 6 months), how much is in the town's affordable housing account now (was \$600,000 but with additional monitoring fees, etc., it's getting near \$1 million), and if we can use money in fund to pay for the assessment (yes, but Town Meeting would have to approve). Kerry will share accounting of fund with the Committee (with Whitney Haskell's signoff).
- Mike Runyan suggested we should give some thought to who should be on the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Committee and would we dissolve this committee into that one? Seems like there may be a place for both (Trust oversees deed-restricted affordable housing; Partnership could handle other housing issues/programs like the aging in place programs, etc.). Whitney Haskell indicated that Bedford has both a Partnership & Trust committee; could be helpful in determining scope.
- Bob Young suggested we skip meetings this summer; Mike Runyan indicated if we're going to present to Town Meeting in September we need to meet over the summer.

- Kristin Kassner suggests we look at the data we have (3 years old), think about what has changed since then (skyrocketing prices, etc.), and also think about who is doing what in town with regard to housing so we can streamline and improve that. We can share what we have with Karina at MAPC and when they get back to us with a scope we can review/modify it.

117 S. Bedford Street House

- Town purchased the houses years ago, not part of SHI inventory, original program had preferences for veteran Burlington residents or those were employed in Burlington.
- House was gutted to the studs and is nearly done (needs a few appliances, etc.). Need to start thinking about making the house available to a first time homebuyer. Housing consultant Liz Rust is working on the lottery.
- Need to start thinking about what the criteria/preferences for the lottery: a veteran? family with a disability? The house is not ADA compliant but could probably be modified (does have single floor living, one-step entry, and the corridor was widened).
- Liz Rust says we can have some discretion because of the original parameters.
- Mike Runyan's preference would be to carry on the original goal of a preference for local residents and veterans or people with a disability.
- Bob Young believe veterans should be given first preference, including veterans who don't live in Burlington now but would like to.
- Kristin Kassner says with Grandview there was a criteria about number of years the person had lived in Burlington.
- What determines "appropriate-sized family"? Three bedroom units are hard to come by. Some of the families who applied for the 2-bedroom Seven Springs unit that had too many family members.
- Kerry Donahue asked about hierarchy of preferences and wishes we were doing this after the housing needs assessment because we don't really know where the most need is (single parents? young families?). Not sure it's veterans.
- Income eligibility likely to be 80% AMI (could go lower but that often means the buyer can't get a mortgage).
- Mike Runyan suggested the preference categories should be 1) income eligible, appropriate-sized family, preference to local veteran or family with a disability, 2) income eligible, appropriate-sized family, Burlington resident, 3) income eligible, appropriate-sized family, open statewide.
- Mike Runyan made a motion to go with his preference categories, seconded by Rita Shah, approved by Ernie Covino and Bob Young, Kerry Donahue dissented, motion passed. Mike will forward preferences to the town administrator.
- Mike Runyan will share pictures of the house and schedule a site visit for committee members.
- Bob Young asked if we could do something with BCAT; Mike will contact them.

Kent Cottage

- Mike Runyan indicated this property is located on Network Drive, built in the 1700s, located within Norblom development. Mike indicated that Town Meeting recently voted to allow 9 for-sale units be developed. Provision in town bylaw is that a percentage of any multifamily developments must contain a certain percentage must be set aside as affordable.
- Shari Ellis clarified that's not what happened: Town Meeting approved only the rezoning of property, no units.
- Proponent was supposed to provide a letter but did not do so.
- When proponent comes to the Planning Board for their site permit, they can ask for it, etc.
- Mike Runyan concerned that Town Meeting approved re-zoning without a site proposal.
- Kristin Kassner indicated that, in all multifamily development in town, there is an affordable component, at a minimum to maintain our percentage of affordable housing. This committee should speak up about the affordable housing component.
- Bob Young feels like Planning Board, Town Counsel, etc. should be responsible for this, is angry that this "part time committee" has to provide oversight, etc. Bob spoke at length and was warned by the Chair that he would be muted if he didn't allow others to speak and continue the conversation.
- Mike Runyan feels the Committee should send a letter to Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and other decision makers that there need to be affordable units (or at least one unit?) in this development. Mike will draft the letter.
- Ernie Covino informed the group that the original intent was to preserve the cottage (software company was going to use the space). The PDD bylaw doesn't have provision for affordable housing because there was no housing in the original development.
- Shari Ellis indicated that the letter should also be sent to the ZBRC and Land Use Committees. Committee agreed to do so.

- Mike Runyan departed the meeting, turned it over to Vice Chair Ernie Covino.

Housing page of town website

- Kerry Donahue shared an update on the Housing Information page of the town website; working with Mike Runyan, Ernie Covino, Liz Bonaventure (Planning Dept.) and Jean Gallant (Select Board office), she added a great deal of information to the page (with links, etc.) to clarify what types of affordable housing units exist in town, how people get information, etc.

Committee appointments

- Kerry Donahue asked for clarity around the appointment of new Committee members next month. Seems like there has been no consistent process (Bob Young was interviewed by Town Administrator, others were not, etc.). Kerry would like to know what the process will be to appoint new members, how it will be handled if we have more applicants than seats, if there are term limits, etc.

- Kerry will follow up to get clarity on this.

Other Business

- Minutes of the April meeting were approved unanimously.
- Committee attempted to schedule June meeting; there appear to be a few conflicts (Planning Board meeting June 17, a few committee members out of town on June 24). Kerry Donahue will follow up with full committee to find a June date that works for as many as possible.
- Ernie Covino adjourned meeting at 7:34 pm.