

**WATERTOWN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP  
Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, December 18, 2012 at 6:00 pm  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room**

**Attendees:**

David Leon, Member  
Paul Menton, Member  
Fred Reynolds, Chair  
Paul Fahey, Member  
Anita Shishmanian, Member  
Steve Magoon, DCDP

Danielle Evans, DCDP  
Jennifer Van Campen, MetroWestCD  
Jennifer Raitt, MAPC  
Jeff Brown, Planning Board  
Brian Costello, Housing Authority  
Cliff Cook, Watertown Resident  
Jack Wise, Burkhard Corp.

**I. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Paul Menton made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. Anita Shishmanian seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

**II. Proposed Development- 192 Pleasant Street**

Jack Wise, the developer from Burkhard Corporation presented the plans for the affordable unit at the proposed condominium project at 192 Pleasant St. Danielle Evans explained that the size of the unit complies with the minimum size requirement as well as the 20% margin with the market rate units.

The finishes of the affordable unit were discussed. All of the units including the affordable unit would have base finishes (which purchasers could pay extra for upgrades). All units would have washer/dryer hookups.

Fred Reynolds asked about parking spaces. Jack Wise explained that parking spaces would be for sale and based on location (garage or exterior).

Paul Fahey made a motion to approve the affordable unit. Anita Shishmanian seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**III. CNAHS**

Danielle informed the members that Cambridge Neighborhood Apartment Housing Services (CNAHS) is requesting that last year's grant of \$2,000 to provide foreclosure prevention counseling be renewed. The members and staff discussed the need to continue to program. It was decided that the need was probably still there, but not as critical as previous years. There was a question of where the referrals to CNAHS were coming from. Danielle and Jennifer Van Campen (MetroWest CD) mentioned that they never got any calls looking for foreclosure assistance and never made any referrals. Jennifer surmised that it was likely lenders that were making the referrals.

Fred Reynolds mentioned that the \$2,000 grant provided counseling to 9 Watertown households (88.5 hours), which amounts to \$22.6/hour, which he considered a good value and cheaper than town staff could provide.

Danielle did mention that some of the counseling advice concerned the Town, particularly the recommendation that homeowners take in boarders without going through the process of obtaining special permits as required by the Town's zoning regulations.

Danielle recommended that the WHP consider funding the program for another year, but at a reduced amount (\$1,500) due to the decreasing need for such a program and the limited funds available.

Paul Fahey made a motion to renew the program at \$1,500, but to notify CNAHS of the zoning regulations. Paul Menton seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

#### **IV. Housing Production Plan**

Jennifer Raitt of MAPC distributed a summary of the 10/25/12 Housing Production Plan public forum. She mentioned that the analysis piece of the plan has been completed, and that the next step is to refine goals.

Paul Fahey asked how the goals were prioritized and whether any of the goals conflict. Jennifer Raitt answered that she thought that the Town should prioritize the goals as it didn't happen at the forum.

Fred Reynolds remarked that with the limited redevelopment sites and high costs that heights need to be increased.

Danielle Evans spoke to the idea of implementing goals from a policy standpoint (e.g. increasing inclusionary zoning percentage) rather than by identifying specific sites for housing. Steve Magoon mentioned that it is important to reserve certain areas of town for commercial and industrial uses and not try to develop all vacant sites into housing.

Brian Costello, director of the Watertown Housing Authority, expressed the need for more housing units for people with physical and behavioral disabilities. The WHA has 190 applicants for only 1-2 vacancies a year. Steve Magoon stated that one goal should be to get developers to incorporate universal design and easily adaptable units.

Fred Reynolds spoke to the demand for housing for families. Jennifer Van Campen that she gets a 1,000 calls a year mostly from single mothers, people in their 50s and 60s who are not yet eligible for elderly housing, and those recently discharged from hospitals and nursing homes. She added that there are not a lot of options for single person households.

Danielle mentioned that there are problems with the Town's affordable housing requirements in that it prohibits studio units (which would be good for single person households) and that the minimum size requirements are too large and often larger than most of the market rate units in the same development.

There was discussion about the possibility of increasing the percentage of affordable units required by the Town's ordinance to levels of other cities and towns in the region. It appears that this is not a barrier to development. Cliff Cook, a planner for the City of Cambridge, mentioned that Cambridge incentivizes higher affordability percentages by offering density bonuses.

Jennifer Raitt asked about aging in place and whether there were any resources for that.

David Leon said that there was a network group that provided services in town.

Steve Magoon expressed mixed feelings about aging in place as it results in a lot of housing being taken up (ex: family housing ends up not being available). Jennifer Raitt said there are a lot of ways to look at it.

Brian Costello mentioned that lack of parking is a problem. He has elderly people refuse units because of the lack of parking or a long waiting list for it.

Fred Reynolds asked whether aging in place in a big house is the best idea. He has seen that many seniors end up with reverse mortgages and they burn through their money retrofitting the downstairs for bedrooms and still need to heat entire houses. It also results in social isolation.

Jeff Brown, Planning Board member, thinks that aging in place needs to be addressed in the HPP. It is a lot for seniors to give up their homes and their mobility (cars). David Leon thinks that the Town should aim to provide a range of options for senior to stay connected to the community.

Jennifer Van Campen mentioned that there are a lot of 80+ year old homeowners and not a lot of affordable rental housing stock for seniors.

Brian Costello said that it's important to have a quality product.

Jennifer Raitt asked about possible resources to develop affordable housing. Jennifer Van Campen suggested that the Town pass the Community Preservation Act.

Jennifer Raitt mentioned that they want to plan another public forum, likely in February.

## **V. Adjourn**

Paul Fahey made a motion to adjourn. Anita Shishmanian seconded the motion. The WHP voted 5-0 to adjourn at 8pm. The next meeting will be on January 15th at 6pm.