

**Watertown Housing Partnership
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 21, 2015
Lower Hearing Room
Watertown Administration Building**

Member Attendees

Fred Reynolds (Chair), Cliff Cook, Brian Costello, Torey Dean, David Leon, and Judge Paul Menton

Others Present: Calandra Clark

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. Draft Minutes from March 17, 2015

Mr. Reynolds asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes as presented. Mr. Dean moved to approve the draft March 17, 2015 minutes as presented. Judge Menton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

II. Public Meeting: FY 2016 Draft Annual Action Plan

Mr. Reynolds opened the public meeting on the draft FY 2016 Annual Action Plan (AAP).

Ms. Adams noted the Housing Partnership (Partnership) had previewed the draft FY 2016 AAP at its meeting in March. She noted the draft being discussed tonight was the same as what had been discussed by the Partnership in March.

Mr. Reynolds asked for comments from the audience. Hearing none, he asked for comments or questions from the Partnership members. Hearing none, he asked for a motion on the draft FY2016 AAP.

Mr. Costello moved to approve the draft FY 2016 AAP and send it on to the *MetroWest Consortium*. Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Public Meeting: Citizen Participation Plan for the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans

Mr. Reynolds opened the public meeting on the draft Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) for Watertown's Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plans.

Ms. Adams described the proposed changes to Watertown's current CPP, which dates from 2004. She said most of the changes are to eliminate repetitive language, clarify the difference between what the City of Newton does as head of the HOME Consortium, and add language so that Watertown can send out electronic updates.

Mr. Cook recommended changes to the draft, so that it would read "*...will also be sent out using Watertown's electronic notification.*"

Ms. Clark suggested that the Town look into using social media, including Twitter and Facebook to send out updates generally, including for HOME related items.

Mr. Reynolds suggested changes to the draft, so that it would read "*which are managed by the City of Newton...*"

Ms. Adams said she would also take one more pass through the draft, if the Partnership approved it, to eliminate redundancies, but only make additional changes which did not change the substance or intent of the draft CPP.

Mr. Reynolds asked for additional comments or questions from Partnership members. Hearing none, he asked for comments from the audience. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Judge Paul Menton moved to approve the draft updated Citizen Participation Plan for Watertown's Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans. Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

IV. New Programs: De-leading, Housing Authority, Others?

Ms. Adams noted that she had distributed an updated summary of the funds potentially available to the Partnership for programs. She said the sources of funds included the HOME allocations for FY 2015 and the anticipated 2016 allocation, funds in the Affordable Housing Development Fund (AHDF), and the monies deemed to be Town Match from old CDBG grants. Ms. Adams noted the AHDF comes from payments that private developers make in lieu of providing affordable units on site. She noted the HOME funds could be used for de-leading activities, but in order to do so, the applicants would be income-gated, and the de-leaded unit would also need to come up to code in other ways (*i.e.* roof, physical plant, etc.), and would need to be subject to an affordability restriction. The process used to establish and lend out the funds would be similar to the old Home Improvement Loans (HIP Loans). Ms. Adams also noted she had deducted out the funds already allocated to repair the roof at St. Joseph Hall.

Mr. Reynolds said one of the new programs that the Partnership should consider is a de-leading program. He suggested that this was a significant issue in rental properties, particularly for landlords. He suggested the monies available to the Partnership would be exhausted quickly if loans were provided similar to the HIP loans. As such, he suggested the Partnership consider a Home Show, where private developers and others, such as banks, pay to exhibit. Mr. Reynolds suggested even an educational program would have benefits in raising public awareness, including Fair Housing issues. He suggested involvement by the Town Health Department would be important.

Mr. Costello, Director, Watertown Housing Authority, noted that one of the other projects that the Partnership had discussed at prior meetings was the rehabilitation of balconies at the McSherry Gardens housing on Waverly Avenue. He said that balconies at two buildings had been completed using funds from the MA Department of Housing and Community Development. He said the Housing Authority was \$25,000 short of completing all three remaining buildings. Mr. Costello said he was going to bid out repairs on two buildings, leaving one undone. Mr. Costello also noted that as of 2010, the Housing Authority receives a set allocation from the State bonding authority based on its property portfolio. He said the Housing Authority currently has 539 State units and 50 Federal units (at the Munger property). He said this provides some stability in the Housing Authority's budget, which, if the proportional allocation continues, should allow the Housing Authority to manage its properties using income. He noted the Housing Authority has about a \$1.0 million in capital improvements, down from approximately \$40 million when he was first hired in the 1980s.

Mr. Reynolds suggested that Mr. Costello could include a base bid of repair of two buildings, and include an alternate proposal for repair of three buildings. He asked the consensus of the Partnership members concerning funding for the balcony repairs.

Mr. Costello said that he could carry the costs for the repairs bid, in that the Housing Authority has to show it has funding available to pay for the work before it can bid the work out. He suggested the bids responses would be in by late May or early June at the latest, given that the monies had to be encumbered before the new Fiscal Year.

The Partnership members were inclined to assist with the repairs at McSherry Gardens, based on the bid responses. The members agreed to meet again in May or June to review the bid responses, and make a final determination on the funding.

The Partnership members also suggested it would be helpful to have Ms. Van Campen provide an update on the status of the St. Joseph Hall roof repairs at the next meeting.

V. Incentives for Developers to Increase the Number of Affordable Units, or Decrease the Price of Units

Mr. Reynolds said one of the incentives could be to allow more units (including affordable units) for an increase in building height, or a larger building. He said one of the trade-offs would be less onsite open space.

Mr. Leon suggested that another incentive, distinct from the density bonus in the Inclusionary Zoning could be a buy-down of the affordable units. He noted the density bonus in Watertown's zoning was for a lower rent or purchase price; a lower Area Median Income level for the tenant or purchaser.

Mr. Cook suggested perhaps considering the affordable set-aside be based on number of bedrooms versus number of units in the project. He also suggested looking at applying a density bonus in certain areas of Watertown, such as in the Pleasant Street Corridor District, or Arsenal Corridor, but not others.

Mr. Costello noted that one of the issues for tenants of the Housing Authority properties is that they don't have anywhere definite to go when they start earning more income. He noted he has single people housed in larger units so that they don't end up homeless. He said these people sometimes only have the option of moving out of Watertown to find low cost "transitional" housing: something more than a Housing Authority unit, but costs less than 80% Area Median Income.

Mr. Reynolds suggested that Ms. Adams should consult with Mr. Magoon and Town Legal Counsel to see if Watertown could establish a preference in the Inclusionary Zoning units for Housing Authority residents.

Adjourn

Mr. Reynolds asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Dean moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.