



**Watertown Housing Partnership  
Meeting Minutes  
Special Meeting  
Tuesday, March 29, 2016  
Watertown Administration Building  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**

**Members In Attendance**

Fred Reynolds (Chair), Cliff Cook, Brian Costello (Watertown Housing Authority), David Leon, and Andrea Adams (Senior Planner, Department of Community Development & Planning)

**Others in Attendance**

Steve Magoon (Director, Department of Community Development & Planning/Assistant Town Manager), Jennifer Van Campen (Metro West Collaborative Development), and Helen Oliver (Resident)

**I. Approval of Meeting Minutes: Draft February 16, 2016**

Mr. Reynolds asked for a motion to approve the draft Minutes as presented. Mr. Costello moved to approve the draft Minutes. Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**II. Consider Amending the Requirements for Inclusionary Affordable Housing Town-Wide**

Mr. Leon updated the Housing Partnership on the status of the Regional Mixed Use (RMUD) zoning text amendment. He noted the RMUD text amendment had been heard at a joint meeting of the Planning Board and Town Council, and had been passed. Mr. Leon noted the inclusionary zoning set aside percentage in the RMUD was 15%. He suggested the Housing Partnership discuss whether or not to raise the inclusionary zoning percentage Town-wide, or make more “fine grained” distinctions in various areas of Watertown, or between different scales of projects, by leaving the set aside percentage at 12.5% and requiring an additional 2.5% for projects over a certain size.

Mr. Reynolds asked Mr. Magoon for his analysis of the Planning Board and Town Council’s reaction to the increase to 15% as part of the RMUD?

Mr. Magoon suggested that both Boards seemed in favor of the increase to 15%, but also suggested the Town Council would not be in favor of having different requirements in different parts of Watertown.

Mr. Leon noted the significant economic benefit inherent in creation of the RMUD, particularly to the developer. Based on this, he suggested the set aside be at 15% but at a lower Average Median Income (AMI), such as 65% instead of 80%.

Mr. Reynolds suggested more flexibility for the developer, such as having an option to lower the AMI.

Mr. Cook suggested the Housing Partnership focus on creating certainty, so the development community would know what Watertown’s affordable housing requirements are. He suggested allowing a density bonus.

Mr. Leon suggested a density bonus for a deeper subsidy (a lower AMI) creates an inherent competition between the affordable units and the drive for more density.

Mr. Costello noted the experience of those in Housing Authority properties, where the maximum AMI is 50%. He said there is a chronic need for housing available at all income levels, and that setting the bar at 80% AMI is not really addressing the need in Watertown.

Ms. Van Campen cautioned the Housing Partnership against injecting too much stratification into the affordable housing set aside. She noted that Chapter 40B provides a reduction in the set aside percentage for a deeper income subsidy: 20% set aside at 50% AMI.

Mr. Magoon asked for reactions to setting the AMI at 100%-120% versus 80%. He said there has been a renewed focus on “middle income” affordable housing, but the discussion to date appears to indicate that there is not appetite to set the target AMI in this range.

Mr. Leon suggested his experience is that there is a greater need for housing at 65% AMI.

Mr. Cook said his experience in Cambridge indicates that 100% to 120% of AMI works if the units are ownership. He said this range does not work for rental affordable housing. He also suggested the following to address concerns about impacts to smaller projects:

- 0-9 units = 12.5% affordable set aside
- 10+ units = 15% affordable set aside
  - ✓ 12.5% at 80% AMI
  - ✓ 2.5% at 65% AMI

Mr. Cook also noted that Cambridge would hopefully release a study on affordable units in the near future that would provide more data on this issue.

Mr. Costello suggested that 10% of the affordable units be at 80% AMI and 90% of the affordable units be at 65% AMI.

Mr. Magoon noted that the increase to 12.5% affordable set aside had not been in place very long in Watertown. He urged the Housing Partnership to be thoughtful and consider the long term when discussing further changes to the set aside percentage or the AMI level.

Mr. Reynolds also expressed a concern that having different set aside requirements in different parts of Watertown would be difficult to implement.

Mr. Cook noted that Watertown effectively had different requirements in different parts of Town by size. This meant certain projects had to set aside units as affordable, and others did not.

The members discussed the implications of a requirement where developers would provide 15% of the units at 80% AMI or give 50% of 12.5% of the units at 80% AMI and 50% of the units at 65% AMI.

The members discussed the implications of other development scenarios, including the threshold at which projects would need to provide affordable units, and set aside scenarios with deeper subsidies.

Noting the lateness of the hour, Mr. Reynolds asked staff to put this item on the Agenda for the April meeting. He also asked staff to update the chart on the affordable housing set aside in surrounding municipalities, and the data on Watertown’s progress in reaching 10% of the housing stock as affordable.

## **Adjourn**

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

Mr. Costello moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Leon seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.