

DRAFT BHB Meeting Minutes Jan 26, 2023

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Boxborough Housing Board

MEETING DATE: Thursday, January 26, 2023

TIME: 7:30 pm Virtual Zoom Meeting

Housing Board Members Present: Al Murphy, chair; Diane Friedman, Jessi Robinson, Korinne Stephens, Ron Vogel

Invited Attendees: Becky Neville, Alec Wade

Attendees: Cindy Markowitz

Meeting called to order at 7:40 p.m.

I. Information Items

A. The Boxborough Emergency Assistance Program (BEAP) has finally been launched.

- Both Al and Wendy discussed the BEAP Program
- The program is now available on the town website.
- 10 applications were received, and 4 have been processed.
- Wendy encountered some difficulty but was able to work thru the issues.
- Most requests have been for rent, utilities.

B. Update on MBTA Communities Plan

- Alec presented a compilation of slides from webinars he's attended, to give some framework on what the program has evolved into, what our responsibilities are, the impact on Boxborough, and the timelines associated.
 - The What: Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities - Section 3A program
 - The Why: MA has the 4th highest value of homes- Among the highest in the nation.
 - In order to meet this target and drive housing Section 3A legislation creates a zoning district that will allow housing growth by right at a rate of 15 units per acre - zoning for this would be considered multi-family.
 - The goal is to develop multi-family (not just single-family homes) units that will support a greater density of people, on the same area of land
 - Communities were identified and determined by fixed transit assets for each community, as the MBTA system(T systems and bus lines) increased, so will the zoning regulations for each impacted community.
 - The Impact: 130+ communities were impacted including Boxborough
 - Boxborough is identified as an 'Adjacent Small Town', with the least amount of requirements, the greatest amount of time to accomplish goals
 - We have to create zoning, to allow by-right construction of multi-family housing per acre and to have a minimum creation of 5% housing growth
 - Calculates to 118 units in Boxborough to be created.

- The zone we create has to allow for 118 units of multi-family housing by right at a rate of 15 units per acre creating at least a minimum of 5% housing growth
- The state is missing middle housing, duplex, fourplex, and townhouse - thus the target
- DHCD announced limited revisions to 3A guidelines to allow for greater inclusivity of SHI
- Timeframe for Boxborough- we have until Dec 31, 2025 to adopt final legislation
- AI requested information on the action plan, Immediate step- action plan must be submitted by 1/31/2023, Alec has taken this action. The action plan will articulate technical assistance funding requests, grants, etc. to allow us to adopt legislation
- The action plan is not concrete, but it does serve as an acknowledgment that by Dec 31, 2025, action must be taken to move forward.
- The planning board has already received ideas/concepts from Alec
- Alec will Invite/include BHB in the process to provide feedback
- Alec will invite community members to a public forum info/feedback opportunity as well
- AI mentions Inclusionary zoning to work with this impact on the SHI
- Alec mentions accessory dwelling unit bylaws will be discussed by the planning board, and invite BHB to discussions

II. Minutes

A. Minutes of the 8 December 2022 meeting of the Boxborough Housing Board (BHB)

- Motion to accept the minutes by Diane, second by Korinne, roll call vote carried, minutes accepted.

III. Old Business

A. BRAP – status, policy issues

- Wendy states she's been working hard with the clients.
- Added 3 new families.
- Now have 13 of the 14 slots filled.
- Additional budget has been allocated for another family due to funds being unused during the fiscal year.

B. Resales of affordable units

- The DHCD meeting was postponed to next week, meeting's purpose is to better understand the aspects of the current deed riders in effect vs the DHCD universal deed rider. Korinne will update the board at the next meeting.

C. Update on the effort to build a Public-Safety Facility at 70 – 72 Stow.

- Discussing revisiting our views on this effort and about developing affordable housing on the property.
- Historically, BHB had difficulty attracting a builder interested in developing on this property within the parameters of including affordable housing

- Korinne mentioned past discussions of utilizing this land to develop multi-family housing by right at a rate of 15 units per acre while utilizing the new zoning as adopted by Section 3A.
- Building committee would like to access this land for a public safety building
- Reviewing space assumptions and personnel required and an architecture company has been engaged
- Would the town accept the cost as defined by the BHB sub-committee - valuation of resale. Would replenish the BAHT funds?
- Housing board owns the property.
- Korinne proposes to revisit the discussion on housing to be placed on this property.
- Jessi Robinson agrees to revisit, and include Alec, the Town Planner, in a partnership in this effort acknowledging the capabilities of a volunteer board
- Alec does believe this could house the zone for Section 3A,
- Cindy Markowitz of the Planning Board adds MBTA zoning encouraging pedestrian access to village-like areas which would be consistent with using this parcel
- Cindy Markowitz. is supportive of looking at the purpose as it was originally intended.
- Al suggests a sub-committee to pursue this effort.
- Korinne would like to see Delores and Channing weigh in on this before engaging a formal committee
- Diane notes building committee is actively meeting to act on building the public safety facility on 70-72 Stow Rd
- Al states no closure established and the parcel has not been released by the housing board for public safety building at this point, is truly investing money and effort in attempting
- Cindy Markowitz. believes the planning board would be receptive, to discussing 70-72 Stow Rd housing development further.
- Jessi Robinson Motions to invite members from the Sustainability Committee, Economic Development Committee, and Planning Board to discuss this further path forward to zoning, the potential of utilizing Section 3A MBTA zoning, and to develop housing on the 70-72 Stow Rd parcel as initially intended at our next meeting. The motion was seconded by Korinne, and carried by unanimous vote.

IV. New Business

A. Affordable Housing Maintenance/Preservation Program

- Al Murphy states the background of the housing board's interest in developing and designing programs that are needed. A go-forward for the board is to ensure that affordable housing stock in Boxborough is up to code, and able to be resold (saleable condition).
- Repairs/Upgrades have been identified as a burden on affordable units, both due to financial constraints, and the lack of equity that builds as a result of the deed restriction. The plan is to develop a program that is accessible to the (current 22 deed-restricted homes) burdened by these factors.

- Korinne presented a PowerPoint detailing formalizing a program to support the repair and preservation of these homes as BHB has a vested interest in proper maintenance and code violation identification on these homes.
 - The proposed outline considers establishing a dollar amount, an approved list of repairs/upgrades, an application, and guidelines.
 - The research that was presented shows surrounding towns have programs that include various grant programs for the low-income populations with similar areas of concern related to code violations and maintenance items that could cause safety and resale issues related to failed home inspections. Upgrading of systems to more sustainable options have also been included in other Town's programs.
 - Systems that were identified in the proposal that would be considered to be approved repairs/upgrades include - Roof/Gutters, Siding, Windows, Porch/Deck/Steps, Foundation/Structural, HVAC/Hot Water and Insulation/Energy Efficiency. Again, identifying systems for repair, replacement or upgrade is the key component of the program to ensure safety and saleability.
 - Also discussed was partnering with the Sustainability Committee to further qualify Boxborough as a green community bringing the potential to upgrade affordable homes, and ultimately participate in efforts that qualify the Town access to green community grants from the State.
 - In her numerous conversations with various towns, ongoing programs to support the current inventory of affordable housing have been identified as a critical need thereby confirming BHB efforts are moving in the right direction
 - CBDG fund was identified in the presentation as a potential resource for a grant that could further support this program on a continual basis, although complex and nuanced and may require a town staff member to administer.
 - The board discussed what funds will be accessible for this program. We know we have access to BAHT funding for affordable housing use, as well Ron believed this project fits well within CPA guidelines, further giving immediate access to funds to support the effort for the current 22 homes in our inventory. The goal would be that these funds could be replenished over time via Grant money.
 - Al supports continuing to draft the program details, and formalize guidelines with extensive experience in the development of programming he believes we can go forward with this.
 - A scenario to support this initiative is referenced by a recent attempt of a 40B unit sale in which the owners ultimately decided to forgo (the sale) based on concerns the home would not pass inspection (aka saleable) in conjunction with the lack of ability to have capital improvements factored into the resale price as per the current deed riders restrictions.
 - Alec shared his experience with other towns instituting similar programs including CBDG funding for housing rehab programs Although doable, Alec strongly recommends that we engage with an entity that already operates something similar - it's an incredibly big haul to write and administer this grant-collecting and administrative process to acquire these grants.

- Alec offered to connect Korinne with a contact he has who is familiar with these types of projects.
- It was agreed by the BHB that this is a critical need for our 40B homes (22 units) thus a committee was formed to work out the details, in an effort to keep moving forward on a critical need as timely as possible to establish the programming with access to our current funding (BAHT & CPA) and to then further explore avenues for continued grant approaches to supplement this program in the future
- Korinne officially motioned to create a subcommittee, Ron Vogel seconded the motion, motion carried unanimously. The committee consists of Al, Korinne, Jessi, Diane.
- The committee will draft an application and guidelines for the program. Define funding stipulations via CPA and BAHT funds. In the interim, Korinne will work with Alec to access grant funding for future use.

B. Road acceptance at Boxborough Meadows

- Al explained in detail the circumstances surrounding the issues of road acceptance over the past 18 years. Al circulated documents surrounding this issue both prior to the meeting and during.
- Two statements from 40B unit owners expressing concerns of increased HOA fees and/or special assessments should the Town not accept roads as is.
- It was pointed out that the neighborhood has spent in excess of \$100k thus far and this has truly placed a burden on the 40B unit owners in conjunction with the added expenses of WWTP.
- The BHB agrees there is grave concern that these units will not remain affordable for current and future owners. Therefore the BHB agreed a letter should be written in support of the road acceptance to the Select Board. It was agreed that we would wait to draft said letter until our next meeting in February.
- Becky Neville mentioned that Kathy Vorce (planning board rep at the BLF - Boxborough Leadership Forum) spoke and was very adamant about the wrong-doing that has occurred and that this issue should have been addressed by the Builders and not the homeowners, and the Town should accept the roads. Becky suggested that a citizen petition could be filed (via homeowners association) should the Select Board choose not to put the road acceptance on the warrant.
- Alec said his office handles the application process of road acceptance for the lifecycle of the process. He explained that the BHB can submit a letter in favor of road acceptance to the Select Board via his office.
- Jessi Robinson also mentions chapter 90 funding will be able to be accessed should the roads get accepted by the town.
- BAHT funds were brought up - in the January planning board meeting it was discussed that this could be a potential funding option for the roads at Boxborough Meadows. BHB agreed that further legal clarification would be warranted should the planning board try to pursue this. The opinion of the BHB is this would not be an appropriate use of funds.
- Al agreed to draft a letter in support of the road acceptance and will present it at the BHB meeting on February 9, 2023.

- The Board will vote on providing a letter to the Select Board in Support of Boxborough Meadows Road Acceptance when a quorum is established at our February meeting.
- Korinne and Jessi recused themselves.

C. Affordable Housing Forum -

AI made us aware that we could attend a forum on Affordable Housing at the Acton Town Hall on Wednesday, February 8th at 7 pm.

D. Interview with Ms. Nora Michnovetz regarding the housing board's role.

Channing will update on this topic at the next meeting.

E. Self-Certification Letters

- AI asked for the authority to move forward with mailing out the self-certification letters to the (22) 40B homes.
- Korinne suggested that we hold off on sending out the letters and that we make appropriate edits to said letters in order to gauge potential interest in the maintenance/preservation program and glean potential current needs. The hope is that this new format will elicit a larger response, historically it has fallen short.
- AI agreed this was a good plan of action and asked Korinne to present her new edition of the self-certification letter at the February meeting.

F. Time and format of the next BHB meeting

- Ron moved the Meeting to be held in person on February 9, 2023, at 7:30 pm, Korinne seconded the motion, and a motion was carried unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned. 9:28pm