

MINUTES
Boxborough Housing Board Meeting
August 12, 2021

Board Members Attending: Al Murphy (chair), Dolores Fromer, Ron Vogel, Channing Wagg

Board Members Not in Attendance: Diane Friedmann

Invited Guest: Les Fox, not in attendance

Other Guest: Rose Gage, in attendance via Facetime

The meeting was called to order by Chair Murphy at 7:35 p.m.

I. Minutes

Minutes of the July 8, 2021 Housing Board meeting were presented. Chair Murphy asked for a motion to approve. R. Vogel so motioned and C. Wagg seconded. There was no discussion and the minutes were approved by unanimous vote of the members present.

II. Old Business

A. Boxborough Rental Assistance Program:

- a. Ms. Gage reported that she had received four applications for current cycle participation in the Boxborough Rental Voucher Program (BRAP). Three of these are eligible and the fourth is still in-complete. All are being processed.
- b. Ms. Gage then commented on the nature and degree of community needs, including but extending beyond help with rent, being brought to her attention.
 - i. Rent – many households are behind on rent payments due to COVID-19 related reasons, loss of work, etc.,
 - ii. Suicide – there were four or five related incidents on a recent weekend, causing the police department to request her assistance. Ms. Gage opined that substance abuse was involved but underlying this was stress and anxiety,
 - iii. Other – there is a cohort of residents that are constantly experiencing financial pressure to meet a variety of basic needs. What she termed “chronic poverty” is an on-going problem

B. Case Management

- a. Ms. Gage described the general aspects of case management as she is experiencing it.
 - i. Persons wait too long to ask for assistance,
 - ii. They don't always follow through on the information she provides them,
 - iii. There is a misunderstanding on the part of “clients” as to the availability of assistance, i.e., that some agencies grant funds on an annual basis and that others may do so only on an *ad hoc* basis for a one time need. She pointed out that agencies such as SMOC and ABUW are currently inundated with requests for assistance.

III. New Business

- A. C. Wagg reviewed his thoughts on Housing Board use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to Boxborough (\$1,731,567) some of which can be used for “water, sewage and broadband infrastructure.”
 - a. The need for low-income affordable housing exists,
 - b. This is also recognized by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEIC),
 - c. By allocating certain of the available funds to water/sewage infrastructure on the 72 Stow Road property, it may be possible to reduce the private costs of building a set of affordable housing units on the property that it will make this economically attractive to a developer.
- B. There ensued some commentary by Chair Murphy on the presumed 72 Stow Road site “current” engineering analysis work. He indicated that the results to date of the effort may be inconclusive as to the site’s suitability for a complex capable of sustaining a combination fire and police facility, i.e., a public safety complex.
- C. There followed a general discussion, encompassing the above and possible next steps.
- D. C. Wagg moved that the Housing Board, via a memorandum to the Select Board, present a case for advancing an affordable housing development on the 72 Stow Road property, currently “held” by the board, using ARPA funds as referenced above and asking for Select Board clarification if any objections are raised.
 - a. Ms. Fromer seconded the motion.
 - b. The motion was unanimously approved by the members present.

IV. Adjourn BHB Meeting

A motion was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the members present and the meeting closed at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Channing Wagg, meeting secretary