

Town of Chelmsford

Housing Advisory Board

March 21, 2023 / 2:00 PM / ROOM 200

ATTENDEES

Deb Taverna (chair), Valerie Diggs, and Connie Donahue-Comtois

OTHERS PRESENT

Evan Belansky from Community Development, Town of Chelmsford

Meeting was called to order at 2:05 PM

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes - minutes approved.

2. Master Plan Implementation - Review of HAB recommendations - input to MPIC

Housing Advisory Board recommendations on the Master Plan will be discussed today and at the April meeting.

5.1 Ongoing; CHA has a dedicated position on HAB.

5.3 Ongoing; UMass West scheduled for review and is part of the Affordable Plan Update.

5.4 Ongoing; examples are Center Village (partial implementation)129 (partial implementation), Kinloch is the best example, Payment in Lieu of (PILO) NOTE: Through HAB leadership there has been efficiency in identifying all potential sites public or private.

5.5 Ongoing: Chelmsford Housing Authority (CHA) is modernizing almost all properties. Ex: McFarlin is being completely renovated.

5.6 Ongoing: Oddfellow's House is a good example. Existing deed restrictions remain in place.

5.7 Ongoing; UMass West is all rentals, Chelmsford Woods, Kinloch are all examples. The community prefers ownership over rentals. Rentals are emphasized when they are 40Bs.

5.8 Ongoing; finishing up Smith Street

5.10 Ongoing; Habitat for Humanity but available land is difficult to find. NMCOG has recently reached out. No housing parcel has been found in 10 years. Age-friendly initiative will take the lead on organizing a volunteer effort. The HAB can serve in an advisory capacity.

5.15 Ongoing; Choice's mission through supportive services. Age-friendly initiative. The Limited Accessory Apartments (LAAs) are heavily utilized. The current limit is 750 square feet. HAB is interested in looking at the 750 square foot zoning bylaw. This limit will be examined at the next meeting. On agenda for the April 18, 2023 meeting. Expansions have been granted in cases where residents are wheelchair bound.

5.17 Ongoing; New option: create and add an insert for the tax bills educating residents about options to stay in their homes or other current housing opportunities, as well as tax programs available for help with property taxes. HAB and CHA can present to seniors about options for housing and other supports. An example of new by-laws is UMass West.

2.7 Short-term; Maintain as current (remain as is). The HAB wants to prioritize getting the planning board to update how it looks at PILO. Recommendation is to leave it as is as there is **still a great need** for more affordable housing.

5.9 Short-term; Have done. Currently there is 866,000 in PILO account and currently remains unallocated.

5.11 Short-term. We are a Housing Choice Community by designation and have received a grant. Currently we are working on a 250,000 grant.

5.12 Short-term: Limits what the CHA can do, particularly at Smith Street. Work with NMCOG on this issue.

5.13 Sort-term: Constraint for any non-single-family housing. Mixed use is allowed to have affordable units. NMCOG will keep us updated on new regulations.

5.14 Short-term: HAB will review a work with the Age-friendly initiative to investigate the possibility of Granny Pods or Tiny Houses. Can these

be options in lieu of affordable housing? Use of a septic system for this type of housing is employed thus no strain on the current sewer limitations. May be feasible in lieu of zoning changes. To be discussed further.

5.18 Short-term: Age-friendly initiative should lead this initiative. Perhaps one or two homes per year can be chosen to rehab. HAB can work with Age-friendly on this, but the consensus is that volunteers are hard to find.

Northern Middlesex Town Government (NMCOG) will be invited to the next meeting and will provide an update for review, including socioeconomics, census, and other statistical data both existing and projections. NMCOG can provide other public facilitation services such as surveys, etc.

We need to be at the table to let the community know that while we are at 10% there is still a need for truly affordable housing. There is a perception problem in Chelmsford about 40Bs in that they are looked at as “projects.” Confusion between 40Bs and public housing. Chelmsford Woods is considered “family housing.”

MBTA zoning will be another test for the community. Should include affordable housing. The needs of our ageing population are not being met. May need a variation to the LAA – with tiny homes, etc. Soon seniors will be forced to leave their homes and Chelmsford will have no remaining options. A large percentage of seniors in homes are at risk of not being able to afford their housing. Work with the Age-friendly initiative to develop solutions for senior citizens to assist them to stay in their homes. The education of people in town is paramount to the solution. We may need a clearinghouse for this issue and who to call. Pride and confidentiality are big issues, with the senior tax rate being a good example. Connie spoke to the fact that the CHA is placing seniors in the tax reduction program. HAB needs to work with the Age-friendly initiative to create more opportunities for those seniors seeking tax reductions through volunteer work.

3. Other Housing Project Updates

- 61 Carlisle in East Chelmsford, five units approved in 2019 and extended to June 2024

4. SHI – updates

See above

5. Schedule Next Meeting

April 18 at 2:30 pm to review Master Plan implementation and review housing goals.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Transfer decisions/commentary into Master Plan
2. 243 Riverneck Road
3. Begin review of LAA bylaw.
4. Begin working with Age in Place

MEETING ADJOURNED

3:30 PM