

Princeton Housing Board Minutes
Monthly Meeting
June 10, 2014
Monument Hall – East Meeting Room
One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08542

Present:

Board Members:

Carol Golden
Lance Liverman
Alvin McGowen, Chairman
Omar Nishtar
Ruth Thurmond Scott
Kate Warren

Staff:

Christy Peacock
V Bea Snowdon

Guests:

Ed Truscelli, PCH
Arnaz Yousafzai, PCH

Absent:

Mary Agnes Procaccino
Marilyn Rovira
Ed Schmierer, Esq.
David Schroyer

I. Open Public Meeting Statement

At 5:50PM, Alvin McGowen called the meeting of the Princeton Housing Board to order at by reading: "Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided as required by the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was provided of the date, time, and location of this regular meeting by posting a copy of the adopted schedule of the regular meetings with the Clerk's office and by mailing copies to the Trenton Times and Princeton Packet." He then introduced the new Board Secretary, Bea Snowdon.

II. Public Comment Period

A public comment period was announced. There was no response from those present.

III. Princeton Community Housing (PCH) Report

A copy of the PCH report was distributed to those in attendance. 6 new rental applications have been received. 3 of those applications were certified and 3 were found to be incomplete. This creates a total of 224 applicants on the waitlist.

Future Copperwood tenants have started signing leases. There are 4 moderate income units left. Applicant comments include observations that the rental units are small, and that the additional pet fees and parking fees are excessive. People have dropped out of the application process because of these concerns.

Copperwood unit sizes range from 500 to 800 square feet. The interior finish quality is very good, and all units have the same interiors. All units are one bedroom. The majority of the units are being leased by citizens of Princeton or by people returning to Princeton after a period of residency.

The discovery of a condo clause in the Copperwood lease was discussed. An application for a condo conversion would have to be made for this community to become condo housing. A person who has equity may have a great opportunity if this happens. For others, there is fortunately a senior residency requirement that protects senior renters for a three year period. Should a condo conversion ever be approved at Copperwood, this will provide a period of protection to those unable to afford condo living.

The Merwick Stanworth lotteries were held for all but one three-bedroom unit. These are very nice units with a good location. Overall, there were 16 units available with 25 households in the lottery. July 1 occupancy is expected, for the successful applicants.

IV. Minutes

The minutes from the May 2014 Board meeting were reviewed. Mr. McGowen suggested one name correction. A motion was made by Ruth Thurmond Scott to approve the minutes with the correction. Mr. Nishtar seconded this motion. Ms. Warren abstained from the vote. With all others present in favor, the minutes were accepted.

V. Legal Status Report

An excessive loan taken out by the Owner of 233BH was discussed. The bank failed to note the affordable housing status and deed restriction. We have responded to the foreclosure in a timely fashion, protecting our interests, and will have no liability for this lien. A Sheriff's Sale of this property may take as long as two years.

Representatives from Mason Griffin & Pierson are reaching out to the son of the deceased Owner of 105 HA.

VI. Board Chair report

The Board Chair report included a summary of our progress on the ordinance revisions. Kate Warren has diligently recorded the recent changes made, which include a page of qualifications that must be inserted. The document has been returned to Ed Schmierer for review. The Chairman extended deep appreciation to Ms. Warren, for her exceptional work on the revisions.

Once all notes are combined in this draft, it will go to the Zoning Board.

Outstanding ordinance matters were further discussed. Ms. Warren presented a question about the 'green building list' for developers. This list may need to be inserted into the new ordinance. The category of "middle income" needs to be defined within the ordinance, if the addition of this group is approved by a voting majority of the Board. The rehab portion and segment from 350 on must also be completed. It was decided that these items, and all other ordinance revisions, be discussed in a special meeting on July 8th. This special meeting will immediately follow the regular meeting, already scheduled for July 8th. The Municipality will provide supper for the Board, for that long working session.

Voting that needs to be done before July 8th will be sent to Board Members by email, before the July 4th holiday.

VII. Affordable Housing Report

The Coordinator provided the report for June: There are six units for sale and two units currently under contract for purchase. Two units have been taken off the market, as one Owner changed her mind and the other tenant found support to remain in Princeton.

An affordable owner has requested a rehab loan for the replacement of windows, a hot water heater, and some structural improvements. His current down-payment loan is considered deferred until the house is sold, the property is transferred, or the property is refinanced. All of the owner's obligations have been paid on a timely basis. The low municipal loan rate at 2.4% was discussed against his current credit load. A Board vote was proposed to approve or disapprove the owner's second loan. Carol Golden proposed that we approve the loan, Lance Liverman seconded, and all were in favor of approval of the loan.

This rehab loan will be based on bids, processed through Rehabco, and paid directly to the contractor. The total paid may be less than, but will not exceed, the \$12,000 loan limit approved. Funding for this will come from Princeton's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, established for the rehabilitation of affordable housing units. This will be credited to the current third round of COAH funding requirements.

Management of safety concerns at Griggs Farm was discussed. Under the category of "Innovative Development", a Small Cities Grant, for the refurbishment of unsafe balconies at Griggs Farm, is one possible route for funding repairs. Mayor Lempert has written a letter that Princeton will provide a 20% match, to a grant for the proposed \$279,000 in improvements, to meet grant requirements. If this funding route for the Griggs Farm repairs is chosen, union bidding, the need for construction upgrades, and the grant application process will delay the repairs needed to remedy safety concerns.

PCH rents 70 units in Griggs Farm. PCH felt a need to inspect all balconies, to prudently address all safety concerns. An independent inspector determined that repairs are needed on ten posts, but that there are "no structure failures imminent" and no other hazards. PCH will immediately repair those posts for safety, and then power-wash and paint those decks for cosmetic repair.

If AH takes the repairs made by PCH out of the \$279,000 grant proposed, we are looking at repairs to 48 units at \$5,000 to \$7,000 per balcony. The need for no visible differences between affordable housing and all other units at Griggs Farm was discussed. A prior engineering study, conducted by Griggs Farm, has revealed that the balconies must be replaced within three years.

Given that, after July 1st, COAH may be willing to allow rehab credit for municipal funding used for property rehabilitation, Kate Warren moved that a safety assessment be done of the balconies in question, by Affordable Housing in consultation with qualified engineers, and also that use of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund be considered for any needed repairs. Lance Liverman seconded the motion. To avoid a conflict of interest Omar Nishtar abstained from the vote, with all others present voting in favor of this plan.

A vote was proposed to approve the "windshield count" of existing rehabilitation projects, so that the correct number of projects can be presented to COAH for reduction of the rehab requirement. The request will also be made to move these projects to COAH's current third round. Carol Golden moved to approve these actions, with Kate Warren seconding. All remaining members voted in favor of these actions.

Omar Nishtar reported that failing hot water heaters are creating big problems at Griggs Farm. Members of the Griggs Farm Board are distributing water detectors for safety to 70 units. RCP is handling this, and all agreed that is the appropriate route for addressing this matter at this time.

VIII. Closed Session

The Board went into closed session. A motion was then made by Kate Warren to conclude the meeting, seconded by Ruth Thurmond Scott, with all voting in favor. There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 7:37 PM

Respectfully submitted, V Bea Snowdon