

**Princeton Housing Board**

Monthly Meeting

**September 9, 2014**

Monument Hall – East Meeting Room  
One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08542

**Present:**

**Board Members:**

Carol Golden  
Lance Liverman  
Alvin McGowen  
Omar Nishtar  
David Schroyer  
Ruth Thurmond Scott  
Mary Agnes Procaccino  
Kate Warren

**Staff:**

Christy Peacock  
Ed Schmierer, Esq.  
V Bea Snowdon  
Ed Truscelli, PCH

**Guests:**

Dozier Hammond  
Princeton Resident

**Absent:**

Merilyn Rovira

**I. Call To Order - Open Public Meeting Statement**

At 5:40PM, Chairman McGowen called the meeting of the Princeton Housing Board to order by reading: "This is a regular meeting of the Princeton Housing Board for September 9th. 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 the Princeton Packet." He welcomed all in attendance, inviting them to introduce themselves.

**II. Public Comment**

A public comment period was announced. The Board welcomed a Princeton resident as a guest. She presented the compelling health, educational, and special needs placement history of a 28-year-old son. She also reviewed the changes in New Jersey State and Federal public policies regarding the care and housing of those with special needs. Her disabled son was residing in Pennsylvania, until New Jersey required the 400 people receiving NJ state aid to return to their home state. These individuals are now being housed in NJ state based group homes. The Federal Olmstead Act is systematically closing down all large developmental centers. Since May 22, 2013, the Princeton family's son has been housed in a new group home in Bridgewater. Due to his medical and

behavioral challenges, he needs round the clock monitoring, assistance, and nursing support. Emergency medical response is needed within minutes, for his seizure disorder.

This case presents a need that is supported by a proposal from YOUTH CONSULTATION SERVICE (YCS) of Newark, NJ. YCS proposes that Princeton establish a special needs group home on Hilltop Drive. The preliminary budget for this project is estimated to be \$790,000. Princeton is asked to acquire the property, at a requested funding level of \$500,000. The NJ Housing Mortgage and Finance Agency (HMFA) and Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) would then provide the additional \$290,000 needed for project improvement.

David Schraye presented a summary of group housing in Princeton. He gave the history of the Harrison Street project, funded at \$400,000 by Princeton, as proposed by COMMUNITY OPTIONS. At that time, the State provided matching funds. Losses of tax revenues were initially a concern, but the project was approved. Christy Peacock reports that this Harrison Street home has to be monitored by Princeton. Princeton currently supports 12 beds in residences for those with special needs. Acceptance of this proposal would provide 4 more housing opportunities for those with special needs, for a total of 16.

The NJ Department of Developmental Disabilities will support the process of the establishment of a new group home in Princeton. DDD will provide some funding, with the provision the guest's son resides close to home. YCS, as a provider and manager of special needs group homes, had been fully vetted by State of NJ.

Mr. Schraye says that these beds may be eligible for COAH credit, but a 4-person credit cannot be guaranteed. Christy Peacock provided experience to support challenges to receiving full credit.

Mr. Liverman identified the Trust Fund as the source for Princeton's affordable project funding, noting that the current spending plan would have to be amended. Ms. Procaccino questioned the degree of renovations required at the resident identified for purchase. Mr. Schraye provided a \$250,000 to \$290,000 range estimate, noting the sprinkler system requirement. Ms. Golden questioned staffing of this facility.

### **Group Home Discussion**

The Board reviewed the applicable laws, regulations, and available finances for the YCS proposal. Ms. Peacock reports that \$280,000 of the Trust Fund is currently committed to other affordable housing needs. She conducted an inquiry regarding other possible sources of financial support for this special

needs group home. Beyond the HMFA and DDD renovation funds, none have been identified. DDD funds would supersede Princeton's contribution.

Ms. Scott provided the average cost per bed, for group housing in New Jersey. She offered and examined alternatives in the region. Mr. Schrayer offered the average cost in Princeton for housing units, as a counterpoint.

Mr. Schmierer explained that "gap financing" is normally discussed for programs like this. Establishing a deed restriction then ensures some COAH credit. In these cases, the local municipality generally provides the last project funding to provide housing.

Chairman McGowen proposed tabling the current discussion, to allow further examination of the best way to support special needs housing. Ms. Warren proposed the identification of supportive resources for the family. Ms. Golden, Ms. Procaccino, and Mr. Schrayer volunteered for duty on a Special Task Force, to extend this courtesy. COMMUNITY OPTIONS will also be consulted, as the Board attempts to identify supplemental funds. Board Consensus for these actions was reached, with no motion needed.

### **III. BUSINESS**

#### **Affordable Housing Status Report**

A resident, requesting a loan from FIRST CHOICE, is in forbearance for student loans. She has a new job and appears to be a fine loan candidate. FIRST CHOICE will move ahead with the loan, if the Board will certify her creditworthiness. Debt to income is not an issue in her profile. A motion was made by Ms. Warren to affirm the resident is qualified. Ms. Procaccino seconded this motion, with all in favor of certifying the loan candidate.

A Griggs Farm resident has encountered medical problems and requests a loan of \$3,776.75. The loan will be used to relieve her tax delinquency and to provide half of her first quarter 2015 taxes due. She has an excellent credit record. A Homeowners Assistance loan can be provided from the account dedicated for that purpose. Mr. Liverman motioned to approve this loan. Ms. Thurmond Scott seconded this motion, with all voting in favor.

After more than two years of active marketing, a moderate-income efficiency at 427 BH has not been sold. It is now time for a repurchase. The purchase price is \$72,673. Mr. Schrayer seconded Ms.

Procaccino's motion to purchase the property for \$72,673. All remaining Board members present voted in favor of this motion.

Washington Oaks Condominium Board Member elections are approaching. The Board has two votes in this process. Francis Lynn is the only resident running. Ms. Thurmond Scott seconded Ms. Golden's motion in favor of casting two votes for Mr. Lynn. Ms. Warren abstained. All other Board members present voted in favor of this motion.

Ms. Thurmond Scott presented a request for renewal of HIPs annual lease of a two-bedroom condominium at 132 BH. HIP pays the unit's carrying costs, which include, HOA fees, PSEG, cable, etc. If approved by the Board, a resolution will go to Council. Ms. Procaccino motioned to approve lease renewal. Ms. Golden seconded her motion. Ms. Thurmond Scott abstained, from voting on this motion approved by all others present. Mr. Schmierer will place this item on the municipal agenda. Ms. Warren inquired about the possibility of a longer lease period, prompting discussion on the applicable rules for this agreement.

Review of the Mission Statement was tabled, in favor of more pressing business. To speed revision of the Mission Statement, Ms. Golden requests that all Board Members provide feedback on the current draft. Comments for revisions can be emailed to Ms. Peacock.

The timeline for review of the Board's goals is needed. There are three items that must be accomplished by year's end. Discussion of middle incomes levels is one need. Action is also required for completion of the consultant RFP, before the November town council vote. Amendments to rules and regulations are among other action items. The Rules and Regulation Committee includes Ms. Golden, Ms. Warren, Ms. Thurmond Scott, and Chairman McGowen.

## **Legal**

Mr. Schmierer reports that a response to our OPRA request has been received from COAH. COAH admits they overlooked our new status, in Princeton's Affordable housing calculation. Princeton will receive a new prospective need assessment, as soon as COAH's revision process is complete.

## **Board Chairman Report**

The Chairman shared news from September's Town Council meeting. Another task force has been created on affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Director's role in development may expand and supersede sales and administrative duties. Princeton Borough's history, in developing affordable

housing, was summarized by Mr. Schroyer. Ms. Warren shared that the transition task force wants to do a major assessment of potential affordable housing sites. The new task force now includes Jenny Crumiller, Lance Liverman, and Bernie Miller.

#### **IV. Princeton Community Housing (PCH) Report**

Mr. Truscelli, Director of PCH, reports that 11 new applications have been received in the last month. This creates a total of 244 applicants. There are currently 4 vacancies:

25 Spring Street needs one roommate to join the current female occupant.

A 2-bedroom low-income apartment, at 135 Bayard, became vacant.

Two units at 190 Witherspoon, an efficiency and one bedroom moderate, are vacant

One efficiency is still available at COPPERWOOD. The additional fees, imposed by COPPERWOOD management, challenge applicants for this 55 plus senior community.

All 16 affordable units, in phase one of the MERWICK STANWORTH project, have all been leased. 40 units will be available, in phase two of this project. Completion of phase two is scheduled for Spring 2016. There are already 220 applicants for this offering.

Ms. Warren commented on Mr. Truscelli's excellent presentation before Town Council. Mr. Truscelli confirmed that the reported 957 affordable units, managed by PCH, include those dwellings presently under construction.

#### **V. Minutes**

Draft minutes of the August 12 2014 Board meeting were reviewed. Chairman McGowen seconded Ms. Procaccino's motion to accept the minutes as prepared. All present voted in favor of this motion.

#### **VI. Other Business – Affordable Housing Presentation**

Ms. Warren created and shared an impressive Power Point entitled: Princeton' Affordable Housing Program - Where Are We Now? Where Do We Want to Go? How Do We Get There? The data presented comes from relevant agencies, the census, HUD, and COAH reports. Different percentages and different medians exist, in the entities regarding: what percentage of income is affordable, what income levels constitute each group, and what is the appropriate percentage of housing costs, for those in each category can reasonably bear. For example, 28% or less devoted to housing costs is COAH's description of affordable, while HUD's level is 30% with utilities. COAH's Region 4 median is 64,830., while the HUD median for our region is 95,900. Including the Census, which reports

123,000. as our median, there are three median income levels used for Princeton. Calculated caps seem high, depending on which figures are used. Of Princeton's 9909 dwelling units, 914 are affordable. These statistics include all dwellings that can be owned and rented. 11% of these dwellings are low income owned homes.

Ms. Warren's presentation chronicled offerings at Griggs Farm, Washington Oaks, Karin Court, Elm Court, and other affordable homes, prompting discussion on the levels and degrees of affordability provided. With experience managing Princeton Community Village, Ms. Thurmond Scott observes great value in allowing and promoting upward mobility within the affordable housing codes. PCH rents of non-COAH units were also reviewed, with 81 very low-income units noted.

While Princeton Affordable Housing regulations generally require residency, HUD regulations do not. Typical rent and affordable rent schedules were reviewed at length. 1,951 households are presently waiting for affordable housing. At 9.3% Princeton's current affordable housing stock is very near the National 10% goal. The questions: How do we help people who are here? and What is realistic density? were posed. Potential sites for future development of affordable housing were listed.

Board members expressed interest in examining what can be done, to enable those residents with households already established in Princeton to afford being able to stay? There was active discussion about opportunities to help low and moderately low income people to stay in Princeton.

With input from Board members and staff members, Ms. Warren's Power Point will be slightly revised. Subject to these revisions, Ms. Proccacino motioned that the Power Point be presented to Town Council. All present voted in favor of this motion, after it was seconded by Ms. Thurmond Scott. Ms. Warren received thanks and applause for her brilliant efforts.

## **VII. Adjournment**

With no further business, Ms. Procaccino motioned to adjourn. Chairman McGowen seconded her motion, with all present voting in favor of adjournment at 8:35PM.

Respectfully submitted, V Bea Snowdon