



**PRINCETON MUNICIPAL
AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
March 9, 2021 – VIRTUAL MEETING**

The regular meeting of the Princeton Affordable Housing Board was called to order by Chair Kate Warren at 5:30 pm. She recited the announcement in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: *“In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, 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 with the Clerk’s Office and by emailing copies to the Princeton Packet and the Town Topics.”*

Adequate notice as well as electronic notice of this meeting was provided in accordance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and State regulations governing remote public meetings. The notice included the time, date and location of the meeting and clear and concise instructions for accessing the meeting via computer, smart device, or telephone. The agenda and all related documents and other materials were posted electronically on Princeton's meeting portal and made available for download at least forty-eight hours prior to the Meeting

ROLL CALL

Present: Carol Golden, Dosier Hammond, Maria Juega, Lex Kochmann, Lance Liverman, Mary Agnes Procaccino, Colin Vonvorys, Kate Warren, Dwaine Williamson

Excused:

Quorum: 10

Also present: Maureen Fullaway (PAH), Ed Schmierer, Esq., Ed Truscelli, (PCH) and Claribel Santiago (PCH), Gabby Michel (PCH)

Guests: Matt Mleczek and Juan Blanco, *Not in our Town Princeton*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 9, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes as presented dated February 9, 2021, subject to any clerical change was made first by Ms. Procaccino seconded by Mr. Hammond, all in favor by voice vote. Abstained: Ms. Golden

The motion to approve the closed session dated February 9, 2021 was made first by Ms. Procaccino seconded by Mr. Liverman, all in favor by voice vote. Abstained: Ms. Golden

Status Reports from CGP, PCH and PAH

PCH Development Corporation

Mr. Truscelli introduced Gabby Michel, new Multi-site Manager and Claribel Santiago, Administrative Agent for the rentals. Mr. Truscelli stated that future reports for Princeton rental units and Merwick Stanworth units will continue to include reasons they were denied approval. Ms. Juega asked if the same information can be requested from administrative agents of all affordable units as well as the units owned by PCH. Per Mr. Truscelli, he is currently focusing on the scope of work for which PCH is responsible to the Municipality. The additional work can be discussed; to include reasons for denial is not part of their work to the Municipality as the administrative agent. Ms. Juega opined that this would be helpful information to the Board to address reasons why so many applicants are rejected or decline to go through the screening process. Mr. Hammond would like to know the reasons an applicant would not qualify; can be further discussed at another time. Mr. Truscelli will discuss the additional work details with his team.

Ms. Santiago reported on the vacancies, applications and available units managed by PCH. Landlords handle the background screening. Ms. Juega questioned lack of information on how many applicants applied for the vacant Palmer Sq units in February and the high number of applicants (10 out of 11) applicants who declined screening in the case of 190D Witherspoon. PCH requested from Ms. Juega a list of questions prior to meeting so they may be prepared with answers. Chair Warren, Mr. Hammond and Ms. Juega will create list of the categories of data they would like to be included in the monthly reports to discuss with PCH. Mr. Liverman suggested that once the list of questions is created, any new questions that come up during the meeting should be discussed at a future date.

Mayor Freda is willing to speak with the landlord at Palmer Square about the persistent vacancy of the 2 units in question Ms. Santiago commented that applicants' issues regarding the Palmer Square studio is the unit size and parking fee. Ms. Santiago continued with her report on Griggs Farm and Elm Court. Applicants can be on more than one waiting list; PCH purges annually. Ms. Santiago explained how they contact applicants and the purging process; applications are due by April 23. Ms. Juega inquired about any follow up process with the applicants for the 190D Witherspoon unit given the stark number of applicants who dropped out; if there is no follow up process, can they be contacted individually to get some clarity as to why they did not go forward? Mr. Truscelli responded that it would be very time consuming to call all applicants; they do not respond in a consistent way. If applicant is no longer interested they will not respond no matter the contact method. Mr. Liverman stated that applicants receive the mail correspondence and have the opportunity to reply. If PCH receives a return letter, they can in turn call the applicant's phone number on file. To call all applicants is time consuming and can be considered boarder line harassment. Ms. Santiago stated that if the applicant is really interested, they will respond to the communications; there are a number of reasons an applicant may not respond. Ms. Santiago explained the lottery system, in terms of what is requested from applicants and the lottery process. Mr. Schmierer explained that Princeton may be able to reimburse the applicant for background checks if they are selected for a unit and move into that unit. Reimbursement would be made through the Development Fee Trust Fund in the Affordability Assistance category. Application fees vary based on the housing unit. Ms. Procaccino stated that the applicants need to be responsible for their own actions.

Community Grant & Planning (CGP) – Maureen Fullaway

Ms. Fullaway reported on behalf of CGP, which is the administrative agent for Avalon Bay. She reported on their vacancies, applications and available units; there is one 2-bedroom unit available. They have 6,131 on their waiting list, of which 1,442 are from Region 4 and have preference above other applicants. Ms. Juega wants to ask for same report from CGP as from PCH regarding reasons for applicant rejection; Ms. Fullaway will ask. She is not sure if CGP purged their list this year.

Princeton Affordable Housing – Maureen Fullaway

Ms. Fullaway reported on sales:

- 213 & 225 Brick House Road; under renovation
- 414 Brick House Road is sold
- 31 Billie Ellis is sold
- 38 Billie Ellis, 2-bedroom mod: we purchased the unit and it needs renovation; she will put out bid request
- 274 Griggs Drive, owner moved back to Haiti; she sent email, no response. This violates the deed restriction. His HOA and property taxes are up to date. Mr. Schmierer can send legal



correspondence by email. When Ms. Fullaway spoke to the brother, she requested a copy of the Power of Attorney granted to the brother to sell unit. Unit is currently empty. There was further discussion on various methods to contact owner.

Chair/Vice–Chair Status Reports

Vice-Chair Hammond reported on the *Overcoming Obstacles Subcommittee*; he received legislative feedback from Housing Community Network of NJ today; after he reviews, he will report to the Board for review. The subcommittee members will be meeting in the next few weeks; entire subcommittee should be meeting in about a month.

Vice-Chair Hammond reported that the *Credit Worthy Bill* is coming up on Thursday; action alert. He will send out information to Board.

Vice-Chair Hammond reported on the *People’s Bill*; NJ is currently waiting on federal funds. The Housing Network of NJ is pressuring them to be sure all various items will be addressed. We hope the bill will be signed off this week. The *People’s Bill* has passed in the Assembly and Senate, but the Senate leadership has not moved it up to the Governor.

Vice-Chair Hammond reported that the *Legislative and Best Practices Subcommittee on Overcoming Obstacles* is waiting for feedback before meeting and moving forward. This subcommittee includes this Board, Civil Rights and the Human Services Commissions; their goal is to help applicants overcome obstacles that keep them being approved for Affordable Housing. Vice-Chair Hammond reported that at the Council meeting ordinances were revised for both the Township and the Borough.

Chair Warren reported on the Uniform Housing Affordability Controls (UHAC). Ms. Warren, Ms. Fullaway and Mr. Liverman met to discuss possible revisions. Ed Schmierer reported that the Affordable Housing Professionals of New Jersey (AHPNJ) several years ago recommended UHAC revisions to the NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency. Unfortunately, only the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) was authorized to make revisions, and COAH no longer exists. Change may have to be enabled by the State Legislature. However, the group decided to review the recommendations made by the AHPNJ and make additional revisions for consideration.

Financial Counseling – Maria Juega

Chair Warren asked Ms. Juega for summary of activities. Chair Warren’s understanding is that a flyer is being prepared after attending a Zoom meeting with ISLES to help in getting communications out. Ms. Fullaway reported that the resolution has been submitted for approval at the next Council meeting. Ms. Juega would like to see the resolution; changes cannot be made at this time since it has already been submitted. Ms. Juega reported on the pilot program, the marketing and application process and who will be responsible for specific pieces of the program. Applicants will be directed to contact Isles; application deadline is end of May based on a first come first serve basis. Mr. Hammond requested clarification; Isles will handle intake; yes. There were discussions on who is eligible to participate in the program, besides residents in targeted developments. The program is set to assist up to 15-20 households. Mr. Schmierer explained how the pilot program is anticipated to run and is being funded through the Trust Fund. Mr. Truscelli will send information to residents and applicants on the wait list for specific housing developments; mailing will be sent out to nearly 1,000 households. First 20 responding will participate in the program. Chair Warren asked Ms. Juega to write up the program process. If public would like to see the resolution, it will be posted in the agenda.

Legal – Ed Schmierer

Mr. Schmierer reported that at the Council Meeting, the new ordinance was adopted that will allow this Board to have up to three alternates. Currently Ms. Golden is Alternate #1 and Ms. Kochmann is Alternate #2. We anticipate Mr. Mleczo will become Alternate #3. Mr. Schmierer reported that they



have been busy with sales; Ms. Fullaway has been successful in getting units ready to sell. The program has been working well in facilitating the private sales.

Councilman Williamson confirmed that the Council did pass the ordinance to add the 3rd alternate; the wording allows up to 3 alternates. The Council appoints the members, not the Board. Chair Warren asked for clarification of who is eligible to vote. Mr. Schmierer explained the roles and differences of the members; regular members and alternates. If a regular member is missing, then the alternate would move up to vote. Alternates attending can participate, but not vote if all Regular members are available.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Golden provided an update on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Rental Assistance Program which is being coordinated by HIP. HIP received 51 applications, 47 have been approved. Applicants are required to have a rental lease. The County has \$11 million for rental assistance, which does not require a lease. Ms. Golden has been mediating with landlords. CDBG allows rental assistance for up to 6 months. If rental assistance is for over 100 days, lead inspection will be required; HIP does not have funding to perform lead inspections. For this reason, HIP is distributing up to 3 months' rental assistance. They anticipate the lead inspection requirement to be removed; this will allow HIP to provide up to 6 months assistance. County can assist with utility payments; deadline is March 15. More federal money for rental assistance is coming through the state. Rental assistance is only for those affected by COVID.

Ms. Fullaway reported on the Rehab Program; she sent out 8 applications, 2 were submitted. Of the 2, one has been qualified and already to go out to bid; the other applicant is being qualified.

ADJOURNMENT

The motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 pm was first moved by Mr. Vonvorys seconded by Ms. Procaccino, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie M. Moy
Recording Secretary