



**PRINCETON MUNICIPAL
AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
May 9, 2023– VIRTUAL MEETING**

The regular meeting of the Princeton Affordable Housing Board was called to order by Vice Chair Dosier Hammond at 5:30 pm. He 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: Dosier Hammond, Maria Juega, Lance Liverman, Mary Agnes Procaccino, Carol Golden (1),
Matt Mleczko (3)
Excused: Colin Vonvorys, Kate Warren, Councilman Leighton Newlin, Lex Kochmann (2)
Quorum: 6

Also present: Lewis Hurd (PAH), Ed Schmierer, Esq., Ed Truscelli, (PCHDC) and Claribel Santiago (PCHDC)

Public Present: Roger Martindell, Esq., Pam Wells (Maple Terrace Resident), Earlene Baumunk(Avalon Bay Resident), Caty Dominguez (LALDEF)

Public Comments – None

Approval of Minutes –April 11, 2023

A motion to approve the minutes dated April 11, 2023 as amended was made first by Ms. Procaccino, seconded by Ms. Juega, all in favor by voice vote.

Status Reports from CGP, PCH and PAH

PCH Development Corporation – Ed Truscelli and Claribel Santiago

Ms. Santiago provided the monthly report for March. Mr. Truscelli shared his screen. There are two vacancies; a studio and 45 Spring St. Notices marketing the units are posted.

Ms. Juega expressed her concerns for the 750 credit score requirement for the Nelson Glass Complex affordable unit. Only one unit is an Affordable unit. The score was set by the landlord.

Community Grant & Planning (CGP) – Dosier Hammond

Vice Chair Hammond reported that Avalon Bay does not have any vacancies.

Princeton Circle – Avalon Bay Thanet Development

Vice Chair Hammond reported that Princeton Circle opened their initial rental application intake

Ms. Juega stated that she assisted residents in Region 4 with their application to Princeton Circle and they received letters stating what number they are on the waiting list (one has a number over 11,000) and that there is over 14,000+ people on this waiting list. Ms. Juega asked if anyone on the Board understands how the Region 4 applicants are processed. Mr. Lewis will check with Avalon Bay. Mr. Truscelli suggested we invite all developers to start attending these meetings. Mr. Truscelli explained the PCH marketing plan and how PCH processes Region 4 applications.



Manager's Report – Lewis Hurd

Mr. Hurd reported that he is in the final stages of updating the affirmative marketing plan.

Mr. Hurd reported that the documents for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the Redding Circle Project are complete.

Mr. Hurd reported that they are working on the CDBG funds for the Pannell Center; public hearing will be held in June.

Mr. Hurd reported that he is working on developing a CDBG fund application process.

Mr. Hurd reported on the Rehabilitation Loan Program; he is in the process of hiring a Project Manager for the program. There are 3–4 residents interested in the program. The information has been uploaded to the NJ Resource Center website.

Princeton Affordable For Sale Units

Mr. Hurd reported that there are currently four units available for sale; one is nearing going to contract. He has added this information to the Affordable Housing website and with the NJ Resource Center. The AH website updating continues to be worked on. For sale units will be listed on the site.

For Sale units currently available are:

- 425 Brick House Road – Studio, low income
- 121 Hamilton St. – Condominium, 2 bedroom, moderate income
- 685 David Brearly Court – Townhouse, 3 bedroom, moderate income

Washington Oaks Sprinkler System

Mr. Hurd reported that he and the Fire Marshall continue working with the residents to resolve the issue. He has received requests from residents who are interested in the rehabilitation loan for the repair.

Chair/Vice–Chair Status Reports

Vice–Chair Hammond did not have anything to report.

Liaison Report – Nothing to report

Legal Update – Ed Schmierer, Esq.

Attorney Schmierer provided a summary of daily activities that he is working on. He is working with Mr. Hurd on processing applications for the units for sale. He is also working with Mr. Hurd on tweaking the Marketing Plan.

Mr. Hurd explained how applicants can access information to the affordable rental units from our website.

Tenant Removal Discussion – Maria Juega

Ms. Juega led the discussion on tenant removal activities occurring in the Witherspoon Jackson neighborhood. She stated that she has been hearing, specifically from the Latino population, that residents are being removed from their units, not due to lack of rent payment, but landlords are looking to either sell or have other plans for their units. She heard that a landlord with approximately two dozen units in town does not issue written leases to tenants and is now sending Notice to Cease indicating to tenants that they may be evicted due to an alleged violation of a verbal lease (occupancy) or tampering with fire alarms. Similar letters have been sent to other tenants. Ms. Juega expressed her concerns for the overlay in the Witherspoon Jackson neighborhood removing low income residents in the area, specifically affecting



Latino immigrants. She knows of two families who have been/will be removed from their units with short notice. She states tenants need protection against this process and need to be educated on what their legal rights are if the landlord removes them from their units. She has discussed this with Roger Martindell, who is a landlord tenant attorney. They discussed hosting a tenant rights workshop in conjunction with the Human Services and Affordable Housing to inform tenants on their rights. She asked the Board for their advice and consideration/endorsement of the project.

Mr. Liverman explained what is occurring in Princeton regarding housing inspections and the NJS housing code that must be adhered to. The State is forcing landlords to correct problems in their buildings. The landlord Ms. Juega is addressing has received 45 violations; he provided some details concerning this specific building. The building is overcrowded with fire safety concerns. He supports the idea of holding an informational tenant workshop. Mr. Liverman explained his process as a landlord when renting his units; leases are all in writing. He stated that it will be very difficult to hold this landlord under the gun due to all the violations placed on this dwelling.

Ms. Juega stated that the tenants are blameless and should be protected and the landlord should be held responsible. She opines that the municipality should take action against the landlord.

Mr. Liverman opined that because there is no written lease, the landlord does not know who the tenants are. Residents are moving in and out of the dwelling without even a verbal lease.

Mr. Hurd spoke to Rhodalynn Jones, Director of Human Services, regarding the notice time frame to tenants and whether it has to be in writing or can be done verbally.

Attorney Schmierer agreed that a forum to educate the public on tenant rights is a good idea. A number of units are turning over in this neighborhood; people want to sell or do something different. Each situation is unique and is considered case by case. In the case of this dwelling, the tenants may not have legal rights to the unit and are living there by invitation of the actual tenant. He stated that we have to be careful when setting up a program to provide decent, affordable or free legal advice about what their rights are.

Attorney Schmierer stated that the Mercer County Legal Aid Society (MCLAS) in Trenton can provide legal advice to tenants in the County. He suggested that MCLAS be invited to participate in the workshop. The Housing Board can recommend the partnership, however, he suggested that Human Services should oversee the event. This service is not within the purview of the Housing Board. He repeated, each case is evaluated individually; a number of factors have to be considered before making any determination.

Ms. Golden stated that MCLAS cannot assist undocumented residents. They can seek assistance from the Volunteer Lawyers for Justice NJ (VLJ). Ms. Juega stated that VLJ is overwhelmed with cases.

Roger Martindell, Esq. commented on the housing situation. If a resident lives in an affordable housing unit, they should have the landlord pay for the tenant's transition to new housing. The landlord is responsible for allowing the dwelling going into a poor condition. He opined that the municipality has the enforcement ability to encourage the landlord to pay for relocation of tenants. Mr. Martindell agreed that education is vital for residents; circulars and handouts are just as helpful as a forum. He stated that the tenant can tell the landlord s/he is not leaving until they discuss the issue with an attorney.

Ms. Juega proposed a workshop be held at St. Pauls Church on May 22nd or 23rd. There is a large function room and small offices where attorneys can meet privately with residents. Ms. Juega can be available either evening. Ms. Juega shared that attorney fees at the workshop will be free. She asked Mr. Martindell to check his schedule.



Vice-Chair Hammond asked Attorney Schmierer if this is something the Board needs to agree upon with a vote.

Ms. Juega suggested that we recommend that Affordable Housing and Human Services be involved in this event with Human Services providing the overall coordination.

Attorney Schmierer stated that the Board can make a recommendation to Human Services; the Board cannot tell them to do the work.

Ms. Procaccino asked if a verbal lease was legal. Attorney Schmierer responded yes. She further asked if a tenant rents out rooms to roommates without the landlord's knowledge or permission, is this legal?

Attorney Schmierer responded that if there is a written lease that states subletting is not allowed without the approval of the landlord, then it is not legal. If residents are illegally subletting, the landlord would most likely not be responsible for relocating such residents. The illegal sublet residents do not have a legal contract with the landlord meaning that they are illegally occupying the building.

Mr. Hurd asked if this is within the purview of the Affordable Housing Department. He believes it was stated earlier that this would fall under Human Services. If Ms. Juega is seeking assistance from Human Services, she needs to go to their Board requesting their involvement. The Housing Board can make the recommendation; Human Services will decide whether they will participate. Ms. Juega stated that she spoke with Jeff Grosser, Rho Jones and Veronica Olivares Weber and they are in support of the project. Ms. Juega stated that the Affordable Housing involvement would be to assist residents in completing housing applications. She will recruit volunteers to assist in the application process.

The motion to make the recommendation to suggest that Affordable Housing collaborate with Human Services to sponsor the event at St. Pauls and possible future events for tenant education and outreach, providing both legal assistance, tenant rights issues along with assisting people with Affordable Housing applications. Vice Chair Hammond amended the motion to state that the Housing Board make the recommendation to Human Services that Human Services coordinate the event with the assistance of the Affordable Housing Board and that Human Services be the main agent to coordinate the event. Vice Chair Hammond opened the floor to the Board for comments.

Caty Dominguez from for Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF) commented that tenants should be made aware that each situation is unique. She agrees that education is needed.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Procaccino.

Roll Call in Favor: Juega, Liverman, Procaccino, Golden, Mleczeko, Hammond

Legislation – Vice Chair Hammond did not have anything to report.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) – Mr. Mleczeko did not have anything to report.

Mr. Mleczeko announced that he and wife will be relocating out of the Princeton area; therefore, this may be his last meeting. He thanked everyone for the opportunity to work with the Board. Everyone wished Mr. Mleczeko and his wife well on their new adventure.

Mr. Hurd amended his report; the property leased to HIP, the heating system is broken and needs to be replaced. Affordable Housing Trust Funds will be used to replace the system.



New Business – None

Other Business – None

ADJOURNMENT

The motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 pm was first moved by Mr. Mleczko, seconded by Ms. Golden, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie M. Moy
Recording Secretary

APPROVED