



**PRINCETON MUNICIPAL
AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
July 14, 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: Dosier Hammond, Carol Golden (1), Maria Juega, Lex Kochmann (2), Mary Agnes Procaccino, Colin Vonvorys, Kate Warren, Dwaine Williamson, Matt Mleczko (3)

Excused: Lance Liverman

Quorum: 9

Also present: Maureen Fullaway (PAH), Ed Schmierer, Esq., Ed Truscelli, (PCH), Claribel Santiago (PCH), and the following members of the public: Roger Martindale, Ryan Lilienthal, John Heilner, Leighton Newlin and Hrishu Somayaji.

Chair Warren recited the following prior to start of the meeting:

Good evening and welcome to the regular meeting of the Housing Board.

In light of the number of attendees who may be here this evening to speak to the agenda item proposed by Maria Juega, I will limit each speaker to three minutes with no yielding of time to another and will cut off public comment after 20 minutes, or thereabout, in an effort to adhere to our scheduled 7PM sign off. We can certainly continue with public comment at the next meeting, if necessary.

Please be mindful that the Housing Board is comprised of community volunteers who give time and energy to address important affordable housing issues within our community. We act in an advisory capacity in recommending policy or policy changes to the Mayor and Council for their review and consideration.

Affordable housing is a complex issue. To help highlight the complexity of the issues facing this Board and the constraints within the program functions, it is important to keep in mind that affordable housing is regulated by the State and the Federal Government. Implementation is guided by law through UHAC and HUD regulations, to which administrative agents must adhere. Policy changes must come through either the Federal Government, the State of NJ or the Courts, and cannot be implemented by local governing bodies, including the Affordable Housing Board or the Princeton Council. Changes to UHAC itself would most likely need to come from the NJ Legislature. We have seen this recently when the Legislature passed the



Ban the Box law that prohibits asking questions about criminal backgrounds on preliminary rental applications. And changes to the HUD regulations must come through the Federal channels.

The discussion this evening is focused on proposed changes to the preliminary universal application used by the municipality in administering its affordable housing program.

Public Comments (not related to agenda item) – None

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes dated June 9, 2021 as presented was made first by Ms. Procaccino seconded by Councilman Williamson, all in favor by voice vote by eligible members.

Mr. Hammond requested clarification on voting eligibility regarding the alternates.

Status Reports from CGP, PCH and PAH

PCH Development Corporation – Ed Truscelli and Claribel Santiago

Mr. Truscelli provided a summary of what PCH Development Corp.'s role and responsibilities are with the Municipality. Ms. Santiago went over the monthly report, explaining the number of applications and vacancies. Annual updates for all developments were completed.

Community Grant & Planning (CGP) – Maureen Fullaway

Ms. Fullaway reported that Avalon Bay currently does not have any vacancies. They have 7,028 on their wait list; 1,613 from Region 4. Councilman Williamson would like to know how many on the wait list are from Princeton; Ms. Fullaway will request information from CGP.

Princeton Affordable Housing Sales – Maureen Fullaway

Ms. Fullaway reported that there has been little change from last report.

- *213 Brickhouse & 225 Brickhouse Roads* – sales contracts have been executed and are under review by Mr. Schmierer's office. We anticipate closing in August for both.
- *38 Billie Ellis* – still under construction; almost completed.
- *274 Griggs Drive* – owner is still in Haiti; applicants on wait list has been contacted
- *37 Billie Ellis* – privately owned, construction is almost complete; hope to begin marketing August 1.

Chair/Vice–Chair Status Reports

Chair Warren did not have anything to report.

Vice–Chair Hammond is working with the Best Practices and Legislative Subcommittees that include members from the Princeton Human Services Commission and Civil Rights Commission. Vice–Chair Hammond summed what each subcommittee is doing. The Legislative has seen progress; the Fair Chance Housing Act has passed and signed by the Governor; he explained the bill. Vice–Chair Hammond reported that there are four bills in front of the legislators for review; he described the bills. The most important one is the eviction and mortgage moratorium extension bill, giving people opportunity to catch up on rent and mortgage payments.

Ms. Juega asked if possible if we can move up the discussion on her proposal so the public can speak. Chair Warren asked the public to sign in the chat room with name and affiliation. Chair Warren asked Board members if anyone has to leave prior to a potential vote.



The motion to amend the order of discussion items was first moved by Vice–Chair Hammond, seconded by Ms. Procaccino, all in favor by voice vote. Business will be moved up following Legal.

Vice–Chair Hammond stated that the Fair Chance in Housing Resolution will not be voted on since the bill has already passed and signed by the Governor.

Legal Update – Ed Schmierer

Mr. Schmierer stated that he drafted the resolution to give a waiver to Palmer Square for the 2–bedroom moderate income unit which should be occupied by two or three people. Due the small size of the unit, the waver was to allow Palmer Square to rent to one person. Mr. Schmierer noted that PCH’s monthly report indicated rental application activity for the unit. Since Palmer Square did not ask for this resolution, Mr. Schmierer recommended the Board table the proposed waiver. This will allow the current applicant to move forward in the application process. Chair Warren asked Mr. Truscelli for the status of the updated marketing materials as requested by Palmer Square. Mr. Truscelli sent out new marketing materials as requested; it is unknown if the current activity is due to the updated flyers.

The motion to table the draft resolution for the waiver was first moved by Mr. Hammond, seconded by Ms. Procaccino, all in favor by voice vote.

Business (*Voting maybe required*)

Proposal to delete Social Security Numbers from Affordable Rental Applications –

Ms. Juega explained her proposal to amend the line requiring a Social Security number. Ms. Juega proposed that the field requiring the Social Security number be removed or edited. Ms. Juega suggested we follow Avalon Bay’s application, which she circulated to Board members for review. AvalonBay’s application asks the rental applicant for a Social Security number, an individual Tax Identification Number (TIN) or to check a box indicating s/he does not have either. Ms. Juega suggested the Social Security or TIN number could be recorded on the application, but if the rental applicant does not have either it should not prevent him/her from being added to the Waiting List (provided they income qualify for the unit). For clarification Ms. Juega repeated her proposal: *Remove the requirement to provide Social Security Numbers by either applicant or from any of the member of the household. However, this application may collect the information on an optional basis.* Ms. Fullaway asked if she wanted the same lines as stated in the Avalon Bay application; Ms. Juega did not want to discuss details, but to leave for staff.

Public Comment

Roger Martindale, Public

Mr. Martindale supports Ms. Juega’s proposal; the housing application should not require the disclosure of the Social Security number. He opined that asking for the Social Security number at the preliminary stage is not the right time to ask.

For clarification, Chair Warren stated this proposal is only for the Municipality’s preliminary Universal Application as found on the website. This is not for the final application that is before any landlords or developments.

Ryan Lilienthal, Public

Mr. Lilienthal supports Ms. Juega’s proposal. He opined that the requirement to provide a Social Security number on a Preliminary Application is not helpful because it can eliminate an applicant or can dissuade an applicant from applying. He expressed his concerns that mixed status families, that include children who are



citizens, could be excluded from the opportunity to participate in housing program. Chair Warren stated that the Princeton Affordable Housing Board worked hard on the issue of mixed status families to ensure they would receive housing opportunities.

John Heilner, Resident

Mr. Heilner is in support of Ms. Juega's proposal and provided his reasons and how it impacts our immigrant households. Princeton should take pride in how we welcome immigrants. Princeton's Human Services Commission was asked by the NJ Business Immigration Coalition to write a brief paper on what Princeton is has done for its immigrant community. The paper was presented to the Princeton Mercer Chamber of Commerce. Mayor Freda asked for the paper to be published in the semi-weekly newsletter twice.

Hrishi Somayaji, Princeton Graduate Student and Princeton Mutual Aid (PMA)

Mr. Somoyaji is in support of Ms. Juega's proposal. Mr. Somayaji is a member of Princeton Mutual Aid and Unidad Latina en Accion NJ. He works with both documented and undocumented immigrants, the latter of which have difficulty applying for aid without a Social Security number. Those who have Tax Identification Number pay taxes and are more likely able to apply for social programs.

Vice-Chair Hammond read an email from a supporter, Alma Concepcion, who could not attend the meeting. He also read Ms. Fullaway's response to Ms. Conception.

The motion to close to the public was first moved by Ms. Procaccino, seconded by Vice-Chair Hammond, all in favor by voice vote.

Board continued their discussion regarding the proposal. Ms. Juega added additional information to clarify issues. She opined providing a Social Security number is discriminatory because it treats those without a Social Security number differently. It signifies the person with a foreign birth, but it is not a proxy for immigration status. Having a Social Security number does not mean you have immigration status. Not having a Social Security number does not mean s/he is illegally in this country. Per Ms. Juega, there is no association between having a Social Security number and having legal immigration status in this country. She stated that not having a Social Security number means s/he was not born here therefore not assigned one.

Ms. Golden questioned the premise that there is no connection between having a Social Security number and immigration status. Ms. Golden made the point that even if the preliminary application did not require a Social Security number or TIN, the final application may require one. Ms. Golden was concerned that applicants may get a false hope that they will be eligible for an affordable unit, only to be disappointed when the final application requires one.

Chair Warren commented that there are housing developments tied to federal funds which require Social Security numbers therefore landlords/administrative agents must comply. We, at local level cannot change this federal requirement. The proposal is for the preliminary application only. Ms. Juega stated that her point is asking for Social Security numbers at the preliminary stage serves no legitimate purpose and is discriminatory. Ms. Juega again stated that not having a Social Security number does not equate to illegal immigration status. Ms. Procaccino stated that in order to receive a Social Security number, you must have legal status. Ms. Juega responded that people can be here legally and not have a Social Security number. Ms. Kochmann suggested a compromise: direct applicants to developments they would be qualified for based on their immigration status; let the applicant be aware that they may not be eligible for all developments. Mr. Vonvorys expressed his opinion that some information regarding Social Security numbers and legal status discussed tonight was not correct.



Mayor Freda asked if there is a negative impact to eliminate the requirement for the Social Security number at the preliminary stage. Chair Warren stated that a household does not require a Social Security number to apply for any housing no matter the funding. However, in order for the development to meet the requirements of their funding program, the applicant may be required to have a Social Security number. The universal application should include wording so the applicant is aware that a Social Security number will be required for certain developments. Vice-Chair Hammond stated that he is aware that RPM, who is bringing affordable housing to Princeton, will not require a Social Security number for their application.

Chair Warren would like to table and continue discussion at next meeting. A draft of wording to be included in the Preliminary Universal Application should be developed and discussed at that time prior to submission to the Council. Ms. Juega would like the Board to vote; wording is not needed. She proposed to drop the Social Security number requirement from the Preliminary Universal Application.

The motion to recommend to Council to remove the requirement of the Social Security number for the applicant or any member of the household from the Universal housing application was first moved by Ms. Juega, seconded by Chair Warren. Mr. Vonvorys stated that he would like more information and discussion; a no vote could mean more discussion and information is requested.

Mr. Mleczo stated that there was enough discussion to take a vote and encouraged the Board to vote in support of the proposal.

Roll call in favor: Dosier, Juega, Golden, Kochmann, Warren

Opposed: Procaccino, Vonvorys

Motion carries: 5 – 2

ADJOURNMENT

The motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:14 pm was first moved by Mr. Vonvorys, seconded by Chair Warren, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie M. Moy
Recording Secretary