

AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOARD MEETING
LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ROOM

February 18, 2010

The following are the minutes of an Affordable Housing Board Meeting, which was held on February 18, 2010, in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building Community Development Conference Room.

Statement of Proper Notice

Adequate notice of the regular meeting of the Lawrence Township Affordable Housing Board has been provided by filing an annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk, and by filing the agenda with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building, and mailing to the Trenton Times, the Trentonian and the Lawrence Ledger.

The roll was called as followed at 7:28 PM:

Present: Chairperson Kevin VanHise, Theresa Birch, Skip Conover, Rachel Cotrino, Margaret Currie, Alice Ford, Christopher Pangaldi, and Joseph Rivera

Absent: Vice-Chairperson Barbara Lavine

Excused Absence:

Also Present: James Kownacki, Council Liaison
Pamela Mount, Councilwoman
Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate
Danielle Hickey, Secretary

Review and Revision of Agenda

None

Welcome New Members

The Affordable Housing Board welcomes six new members to the board, as well as a new Council Liaison. The new members include Theresa Birch, Rachel Cotrino, Margaret Currie, Alice Ford, Christopher Pangaldi, Joseph Rivera, and Council Liaison, James Kownacki. All members were welcomed and introduced to the board.

Election of New Officers

Mr. Kevin VanHise was nominated for Chairperson by Mr. Skip Conover. The nomination was seconded by Ms. Margaret Currie. Mr. VanHise ran unopposed for Chairperson, and the vote was unanimous.

Ms. Barbara Lavine was nominated as Vice-Chairperson by Mr. Conover. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Christopher Pangaldi. Ms. Lavine ran unopposed for Vice-Chairperson, and the vote was unanimous.

Approval of Minutes

The December 17, 2009 minutes were unanimously approved.

Approval of 2010 Meeting Schedule

The 2010 Affordable Housing Meeting Schedule was unanimously approved as proposed.

Sustainable Activities – Councilwoman Mount

Councilwoman Mount attended the meeting to discuss current sustainable activities in Lawrence. She explained the philosophy of the town as celebrating the neighborhoods and diversity. She stated that Lawrence has a good balance between housing and jobs. Councilwoman Mount discussed the idea of winterizing and weatherizing affordable housing units in Lawrence, and that the affordable housing units in Lawrence are starting to get old now, so it may also be good to think about energy rated appliances, good insulation, new windows, etc.

Councilwoman Mount discussed the various rebates for purchasing energy star rated appliances. She explained that Debbie Schaeffer of Mrs. G's has programs available for this. Lawrence and the County may have some funds available for these types of programs as well. The County handles programs that are for winterizing and other sustainable programs. Other programs available are programs created to help conserve.

Councilwoman Mount explained the Sustainable Jersey program and that the focus of the program is that they are trying to get the community and townships to start thinking about the way they live. The Mayor's Task Force for a Greener Future formed under the League of Municipalities to help this start this program. A website has been created for the Sustainable Jersey program. On the website, there is a toolkit to start programs. In the first year, 255 townships registered. The registered townships need to put a "Green Team" together to focus on the specific sustainable items that the township will try to accomplish. Forty-two of the 255 townships in NJ were certified in November. The focus for Lawrence Township this year will be on energy, water, and sustainable element.

The main concern for many small businesses in Lawrence is their energy bill. NJ Clean Energy has held meetings for business people to help teach them how to lower their energy cost for their business. Lawrence is currently working on starting a program with rain barrels to use the water from the rain barrels to water the ground and their flowers instead of using water from the hose.

There are approximately 900 businesses in Lawrence. Lawrence wrote a grant for part of the Green House Reduction Program to come up with some way to reduce greenhouse emissions.

For this grant, Lawrence Township came up with the idea of a “Loyalty Card” to help promote Lawrence residents to go to stores/restaurants in Lawrence. For every \$10 you spend, one Lawrence dollar would go on your loyalty card. Businesses will be able to post sales, deals, and promotions on the loyalty card website. They are looking to launch the card in April/May.

Lawrence Township also did an environmental inventory and is looking to put some solar panels on some of the Lawrence Township buildings. Lawrenceville School will be putting up a 30-acre solar array. Rider is looking at leasing the land for a 40-acre solar array. Councilwoman Mount is concerned about the energy costs of the affordable units, and would like this board to come up with some ideas for sustainability of the affordable units. The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has a clean energy program and will do an energy audit on your house for \$125 and tell you what can be done to help you save energy. They will tell you how much money each item completed will cut your monthly bill by. Once the energy audit is done, you can receive \$1,000 to seal up your house. You can get an additional \$10,000 loan to work on the next improvements. There are no income requirements for this program. The only difficulty with this program is you have to have approved contractors complete the repairs and not many contractors are approved. If the unit is a rental unit, the landlord would have to approve these projects. This program can apply to condos as well, if you own the condo. However, with a condo, residents need to be careful about what they own and what they do not own, as well as what the complex association will allow them to do. However, this may be something that the entire condo association may be interested in. This Board could hold a town meeting and invite BPU to come speak about the programs they have available. A news release could go out in the Lawrence Gazette or Lawrence Ledger on any programs the board may run. A program could be held in Lawrence Square Village.

The County is also doing a study on mass transportation. They would like to get Bus Rapid Transit. NJ Transit has proposed to upgrade the buses and make the buses every 15 minutes instead of every hour. There is a Central Jersey Transportation Forum that is committed to making some changes with the transportation problems.

Public Comment

None

Status of Changes at State Level – Kevin VanHise

Chairperson VanHise gave an explanation and overview of the Mount Laurel court cases, as well as COAH’s role in affordable housing within the state. He explained COAH’s 3rd Round of rules and regulations for townships to follow, as well as their currently being held up in the appellate division of court. Chairperson VanHise discussed the proposal of S-1 legislation by Senator Lesniak to have municipalities create their affordable housing plan. With the legislation, as currently drafted, there will be no certification process. Municipalities will set aside 20% for affordable housing. Advocates of COAH are concerned that Townships cannot be trusted to follow through on the requirements. On February 10, 2010, the Director of COAH resigned. Governor Christie also put through an Executive Order #12, stating that COAH cannot do anything for 90 days, and started a Task Force to examine COAH.

Chairperson VanHise feels that this could be a busy year for the Affordable Housing Board, since the State may wipe out everything that COAH has done, which may cause builders to bring lawsuits against the townships. The new proposed legislation may wipe out previous affordable housing requirements and have the townships only be responsible for the requirements

of the new bill. Senator Lesniak has had conversations with the League of Municipalities regarding affordable housing requirements.

The Fair Housing Alliance is currently suing the government, as the government is currently trying to figure out what compliance is/should be. They are debating what the real concern is with affordable housing. Is it a policy to mainstream the inner city into a suburban area or should it be for people who can't afford to live in the town they live in (i.e. workforce housing, teachers, police, firefighters, etc). The Courts are currently working on defining this issue of "affordable housing."

Other Business

None

The next meeting will be held on March 18, 2010.

There being no further business to come before the Affordable Housing Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:51 PM.

Danielle N. Hickey,
Affordable Housing Board Secretary