

Affordable Housing Board Meeting
Thursday, July 24, 2014

The following are the minutes of the Affordable Housing Board meeting, which was held on Thursday, July 24, 2014 in the Community Development Conference Room, located in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building.

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.

Opening of Meeting/Roll Call:

Present: Peter Ferrone, Susan McCloskey, Kevin VanHise, Walker Ristau, Murali Mallampati

Absent: John Masso, James Kownacki, Council Liaison

Excused Absence: Jean Washington, Susan Snook, Secretary

Also Present: J. Andrew Link, Principal Planner

Approval of Minutes:

The June 26, 2014 minutes were approved as submitted by unanimous vote.

Public Comment:

None

Housing Rehabilitation Program Update:

Mr. Link stated we have had a consultant, Affordable Housing Administrators, administer our housing rehab program for two years and Council recently renewed their contract for a third year, Maureen Fullaway. In that two years' time we have done seven rehabs and two more that are underway and then another several applications that Ms. Fullaway is working on. One of the things we had done recently was sent the Housing Rehab flyer around to the homeowners associations so that they could make the residence aware that this program is available and the response has been good from Lawrence Square Village, which has the bulk of the affordable units.

These have to be older units, 1986 to 1993, so we get credit for them. Mr. Mallampati asked that the government allocated funds so they can be repaired and be brought up to standards. Mr. Link stated health and safety issues.

Township Actions:

53 Joyner Court:

Mr. Link stated that 53 Joyner Court is an affordable unit where the owner is in bankruptcy and she offered the unit to the Township and the Township is moving forward with perhaps buying it. There is a resolution on the Council meeting on August 19, 2014 to authorize the Manager to proceed with the purchase of the unit. If Council approves it, we will move right away to buy it and retain it as an affordable unit. Some repairs will be needed and sell it to an income eligible household.

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12 Mendrey Court:

Mr. Link stated 12 Mendrey Court is another affordable unit both in Lawrence Square Village, where currently the owner is not living there and is renting the unit out. The Township Attorney is working to taking an approach to evict the tenant and then that will cut off the income stream from the owner and this will make the owner to sell the unit.

Mr. Ferrone asked about eviction, and in the past, Courts do not like throwing people out. Will there be any difficulty in this case. Mr. Link stated he did not know and will not be a fast process and will keep the Board posted.

Chairperson VanHise asked if the tenant is income qualified. Mr. Link stated he did not know. Chairperson VanHise asked if there was any news from Mr. Caton's office regarding about how COAH is arriving with the data and the numbers for the Townships obligations. Mr. Link stated he prepared an extensive list of comments to submit. Mr. Caton has numerous questions about how they arrived at the numbers; how they credit us or not credit for past rehabs; and is asking for a lot of clarifications and it needs to be more clearly spelled out so we know how to proceed. The total number for new construction is 296 and 98 for rehabs.

Status of Changes at State Level

Ms. McCloskey asked if this is for the new rules; however, she thought they were under a challenge. Chairperson VanHise stated they are under a draft form currently, so all the Townships are scrambling to try and understand how COAH got the numbers, what the numbers are, what they mean. It is a little bit confusing with the prior obligation, then the prospective need and we are doing what every other Township is doing and that is evaluating it and figuring out where you are going to put this obligation. COAH has not been forthcoming with any of the data and then Fair Share Housing Center instituted a motion to enforce litigantes rights file. The Supreme Court, that COAH has responded and their position is that they have followed the order and they released the proposed rules on time and are very similar. COAH figured out the State wide needs, we allocated it per region and brought that down to the municipal level, allowed for credits and limitations reflecting actual conditions within the municipalities and that is exactly what COAH did in rounds 1 and 2. As of this date, no response from the Court yet on what they are going to do. The Court posed deadlines to receive comments and/or changes and meet all the court deadlines committed.

Once the rules are adopted in November you will have until May to submit a plan if the rules stay in place the way they are. There will be a lot of paper work that needs to be submitted, so you need to formulate how you are going to achieve these units and all the backup stuff and have six months to do it. The rules themselves, are adopted, the rules will be the next step and will be back where we have been in the past several years.

Chairperson VanHise stated that is why we see things like Joyner Court and Mendrey Court. The rehabilitation program seems to be a greater focus on rehab units in the proposed rules, so to the extent that we got a really active rehab program that will help us going forward no matter what the rules look like.

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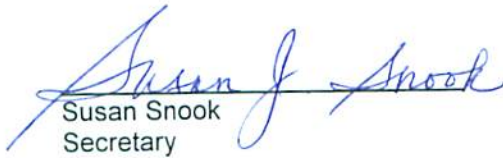
Other Business:

Mr. Mullampati asked how does the Association get the monthly fees that are owed on those units. Chairperson VanHise stated that the Homeowners Association needs to speak to their attorney. Mr. Mullampati stated if the bank forecloses then the Township is able to sell it, they would get six months of back dues. Chairperson VanHise stated the township will not be the seller, the bank will take it to a foreclosure and the bank has a new owner, the Homeowners Association.

Mr. Mullampati stated the Association can rent it or sell it anyway. Chairperson VanHise stated the Association has to sell it to an income qualified eligible applicant. The Association cannot the Association cannot qualify by being owner occupy income qualified individual or family. The Association is violating the deed restrictions for the unit because it is an affordable housing unit.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m. The August 28, 2014 has been cancelled; therefore, the next meeting will be held on September 25, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.


Susan Snook
Secretary

SJS

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