

**Bedford Housing Partnership
Final Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2022 at 7:00 PM
Prepared by Margaret Siciliano, Clerk
Zoom**

Attending Members: Christina Wilgren (chair), Shawn Hanegan (vice chair), Alice Sun, Margaret Siciliano, Elena Choi Loya Zorn, Ellis Kriesberg, Kate Reynolds, and Bopha Malone (non-voting member)

Absent Members: Jane Puffer

Other Present: Liz Valenta (RHSO) and Charlie Ticotsky

Call to order. Wilgren called BHP meeting to order at 7:05 PM via Zoom remote participation conference call. A roll call occurred for committee members to announce if they were present.

Roll call:

Yes: Christina Wilgren (chair), Shawn Hanegan (vice chair), Margaret Siciliano, Elena Choi Loya Zorn, Alice Sun, Kate Reynolds, and Ellis Kriesberg

Not in attendance at time of roll call: Jane Puffer

1. **December 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes:** There were no comments on the December 7, 2021 minutes. Mr. Hanegan made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Sun seconded the motion. Vote: Wilgren-yes, Siciliano-yes, Hanegan-yes, Kriesberg-yes, Zorn-yes, Reynolds-yes, Sun-yes.
The motion carried 7-0-0.
2. **CPC Proposals: update and discussion.**
 - a. **Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit Creation Forgivable Loan Program.** Ms. Wilgren began by explaining that the accessory dwelling unit proposal is not moving forward because it is not eligible for CPC funding and has been told by Liz Rust repeatedly that it is too complicated to make it work. Lincoln has chosen not to use CPC money. Ms. Wilgren recommended that the BHP watch what Lincoln does to see if it would work for Bedford. Lincoln established a property tax deduction for the square footage of the ADU as long as it is rented to a lower income resident to help support the creation of units. Mr. Kriesberg added that Boston has an ADU funding program and offered find out more information on how the program is funded. It may be federally funded.
 - b. **Transfer of money to Trust.** Ms. Wilgren informed the Partnership that the transfer of money to the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust appears to be supported by the CPC. A motion was made by Mr. Hanegan and seconded by Ms. Wilgren for the Partnership to support the transfer of CPC funds to the Trust. Vote: Reynolds-yes, Siciliano-yes, Zorn-yes, Hanegan-yes, Wilgren-yes. Kriesberg- abstain. Sun-no. Motion carried 5-1-1.

3. 330 South Road: update and discussion.

Ms. Wilgren informed the Partnership that she and Tony Fields met with Pam Brown, attorney for the project, the owner, and two other key players with the state and did a walk thru of the site. The barn, built in 1890 or before, has beautiful architecture and is well made. The property has been in the family's possession for over 40 years. Ms. Wilgren believes the owner may not need CPC fund to make the project work, though they may still apply for it. The Town is not required to put forth funds towards the project.

4. Update and discussion of Planning Board review of MBTA communities' multi-family zoning law. DHCD posted their Draft Guidelines for the Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities on December 15, 2021. This new regulation, which is part of the Housing Choice Initiative enacted in an economic development bill passed in January 2021, requires MBTA communities to have at least one zoning district in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets the other criteria in the statute including:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- Not more than ½ miles from a commuter rail station, subway stations, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable
- No age restrictions
- Suitable for families with children

Failure to comply with these multifamily zoning requirements would make a community ineligible for funds from Housing Choice Grants, Local Capital Fund Projects, and MassWorks Infrastructure Program. DHCD may, in its discretion, take non-compliance into consideration when making other discretionary grant awards.

Mr. Hanegan informed the Partnership that under this new proposal from the state Bedford either qualifies or is close to qualifying. It could be a matter of tweaking some zoning language. The mandate means if Bedford does not meet the standards then it is not eligible for funds. The history of funds Bedford received is not straightforward because the names of the funds change with each new administration at the very least so it is not clear just how many times Bedford has benefited from these funds.

Mr. Hanegan also updated the Partnership on the Planning Board's discussion on two-family housing zoning changes. The Planning Board is split on what to do and there will be public hearings going forward. The idea is to allow more 2-family dwellings that will encourage more affordable housing instead of a large single-family house. It is seen as a deterrent to mansionization. The zoning change will promote more affordable options and a variety of housing options that meet the needs identified in the Housing Study. The goal is to present the zoning changes at the fall town meeting. Mr. Hanegan also informed the Partnership that the Planning Board is looking into FAR (floor area ratio) regulations to see if there are changes to be made.

Ms. Reynolds voiced her support for the zoning changes and said that it sounds like a great initiative.

Ms. Zorn stated that it sounds like the Planning Board is seeking input from other committees.

Mr. Hanegan stated that the Planning Board is looking to have a joint meeting with the Partnership.

Ms. Zorn stated that this would be a good idea.

Ms. Wilgren stated that she thought that 20% of the housing would have to qualify for the MBTA funds.

Mr. Hanegan thought that it does not apply to Bedford since it is over the 10% SHI requirement.

Ms. Valenta thought the 20% requirement is the number of new units in the multifamily zoning district and that there is not an affordable requirement.

Ms. Zorn state that multifamily is considered to be a minimum of a three-family dwelling unit.

Mr. Hanegan clarified that the MBTA multi-family zoning law is a moving target. It feels like communities are going to try it and the state will fix the “bugs.”

Ms. Valenta pointed out that there is no requirement for affordable housing and that should be a comment the towns give to the state.

5. **Sustainability Director in FY23 Budget.** Mr. Hanegan requested this be on the agenda because he is looking to advocate for it. It will not be a director position but an energy manager position which would report to the Town Manager and facilities department. The position will implement the net zero plan and new town policies.

Mr. Ticotsky clarified that the position will not be a department head but will work across the departments.

Ms. Sun asked if other communities have this position.

Mr. Ticotsky stated that Lexington, Melrose, and Concord are just some examples.

Mr. Hanegan stated that he is an advocate for the position. There is a lot of literature on how sustainability and affordability go hand and hand. A sustainability staff person could seek grants, help homeowners, and guide developers.

Ms. Wilgren added that Newton goes way above the normal green building standards. Wilgren strongly supports a sustainability director position- especially as it relates to

affordable housing. We have to be looking ahead- solar panels, electric car charging stations, etc.

Mr. Kriesberg asked what the job description is.

Ms. Sun stated that it is premature to discuss this. She added that she does not deny the value and importance of the job, but we have to weigh all the demands that the town is facing.

Mr. Hanegan stated that we can look at what the job could be and say what we would like to see.

Ms. Zorn commented that she feels our committee could be more proactive and there are ways in which the position could promote affordable housing. There is grant funding from the state that could be used to support energy efficiency and affordability.

The Partnership reviewed the Bedford Housing Study to see if the position could be supported based on the housing goals identified in the study. It was determined that a sustainability staff position could help Bedford meet Goal 3 – Environmentally Sustainable Housing. The goal states, “Recognizing the value of ‘embodied energy’ of existing buildings, encourage preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and the reuse and conversion of existing buildings to housing. For new construction, encourage housing that produces as much energy as it consumes, uses minimal, if any fossil fuel, and contribute no additional carbon to the environment.”

Mr. Hanegan made a motion that the Partnership supports a new sustainability position as it supports Goal 3 – Environmentally Sustainable Housing - in the Bedford Housing Study.

Ms. Zorn seconded the motion.

Vote: Wilgren-yes, Siciliano-yes, Hanegan-yes, Kriesberg-yes, Zorn-yes, Reynolds-yes, Sun-yes.

The motion carried 7-0-0.

6. **Bedford Embraces Diversity.** Liz Valenta updated the Partnership on Bedford Embraces Diversity’s CHAPA MEI application. The BED is seeking assistance to build a grass roots housing advocacy group. The group applied in October but was not awarded the funds.
7. **Fair Housing.** Ms. Sun stated that she has been contacted but has not received a formal complaint. The complaint does not appear to be a fair housing issue that is something that we can address under the current rules. Avalon Bay is significantly increasing rents and the tenant can no longer afford the unit. Ms. Sun suggested to the tenant having the issue, that they file a complaint with housing court and seek mediation. The tenant however is fearful of being evicted if she makes an official complaint and was seeking a

risk-free remedy. Ms. Wilgren suggested that maybe Bedford should consider having renewable rent increases be capped. This could be added to our regulatory agreements.

8. **Future Meeting Date:** To be determined. A doodle poll of members was requested.
9. **Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Hanegan and seconded by Zorn. Vote: Siciliano - yes, Hanegan - yes, Wilgren – yes, Zorn- yes, Sun-yes, Reynolds-yes. Kriesberg had left the meeting and was unable to vote. The motion carried 6-0-0.