



Housing Plan Implementation Committee

Date: October 15, 2020
Time: 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM
Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Ben Bradlow, Pam Hallett, Karen Kelleher, Jonathan Nyberg, Jenny Raitt, Michelle Shortsleeve, Patricia Worden, Erin Zwirko.

Guests: Len Diggins, Jon Gersh, Jo Anne Preston.

The Committee first looked at the meeting summary from the October 8 meeting. Patricia had provided some revisions via email which were incorporated. Erin explained that she included an editor's note in the minutes regarding the motion that was clarified to have actually passed. The editor's note indicated that Town Counsel provided guidance on the fact that the motion passed, and that the Committee may want to reconsider or take another vote relative to the one from October 1. Patricia made a motion to approve the summary as amended, and Karen seconded. All those in attendance voted to approve, and Jonathan abstained.

Erin noted that the virtual information forum on housing trusts was held the night before. She thanked the presenters and the members of the Committee that attended. Erin noted that a number of Finance Committee members and Town Meeting members were in attendance. The forum was recorded and the video will be circulated.

Moving on to the discussion of the draft bylaw for an affordable housing trust fund, Jenny noted that she still hadn't received confirmation on which Select Board meeting the article would be considered at before Special Town Meeting. Len indicated that he would work with the Select Board chair to identify the date.

Karen indicated that the Committee may want to rethink the approvals based on the forum from the previous evening. She suggested that approval for borrowing might be appropriate coming from the Select Board. Ben agreed. Patricia also noted that borrowing may be important for leveraging and suggested that Select Board approval may be appropriate in certain circumstances. Patricia went on to suggest that the bylaw may not have overwhelming support from the Finance Committee especially if it is used to support 40B projects. She mentioned Mr. Tosti, former chair of the Finance Committee, did not appear to be supportive during the forum.

Patricia made a motion to prohibit the use of trust funds to support 40B developments. The motion did not receive a second, but further discussion continued on the motion. Karen noted that she did not speak on behalf of all of the Committee during the forum in regard to 40B developments. She suggested that there is an opportunity to create a better outcome for the community if 40B developments provide deeper affordability, which is something that a funding from the trust could support. Patricia noted that she will not support the warrant article without her recommended prohibition. She stated that the Town's policy is against supporting 40B projects. Patricia indicated that a resolution passed at a previous Town Meeting to not support 40B projects in Arlington and she did not think the Committee should go against that policy. Pam indicated that Patricia's statement is inaccurate. Pam stated that the Town does not have a policy against 40B projects, as the Housing Corporation of Arlington has utilized 40B to develop affordable housing. Jonathan agreed with Karen, indicating that it would be shortsighted to include Patricia's prohibition.

Patricia announced that she would no longer support the draft bylaw without such a safeguard. She also indicated that the Town is paying quite a bit of money to protect itself against a 40B project, and the Finance Committee would not be impressed with a change in that policy. Karen indicated that this particular issue does not need to be determined right now, and that trusts are a common tool to support the creation of affordable housing.

Jenny stated that the mission of the HPIC is to implement the Housing Production Plan, which was adopted by the Select Board and the Redevelopment Board. Within the Housing Production Plan is an action to adopt an affordable housing trust fund. A trust could acquire land for affordable housing development, and then meeting the 1.5% minimum land area or the 10% affordable units wouldn't much matter. It would contribute to both. Deeper affordability could also be achieved for residents in need. Jenny stated that she is disappointed that this conversation which was settled in January meetings has come up again. She also stated that if members cannot support the Housing Production Plan, they should reconsider their membership. Ben echoed this critical point about being guided by the Housing Production Plan and the fundamental tenets of the plan. Patricia stated that the HPIC should be following the Housing Production Plan and Town policies, but she won't support the creation of 7,000 units in Arlington. Jenny noted that the Housing Production Plan does not mention 7,000 units. That number of units is far more than Arlington would need to reach 10%. Michelle stated that she supports deeper affordability and would not want the trusts constrained by such a prohibition that Patricia recommended.

Pam asked if members of the Committee could attend the HCA's Board meeting the following Thursday to discuss. Pam also noted that as a municipal board there should be certain processes in place. She thought that the Finance Committee may want to understand the detailed process of how a trust would actually work in Arlington. Karen thought that the most practical way to address additional oversight would be to give the Select Board power to review borrowing. Len noted that any borrowing could be

reviewed by the Finance Committee before the Select Board, although that would likely hamper the ability to act quickly. He also noted that the 80 percent borrowing threshold was to prevent the trust from overleveraging the assets. Jonathan did not think Arlington needed to reinvent the wheel on the trust.

Jenny reminded the Committee that state law fully empowers the trust to handle all aspects of its powers without additional oversight. She noted that the trustees are Select Board appointees and the trust would have to adopt goals and priorities so it is very clear what the trust will be doing year over year.

Karen asked the staff to provide examples of the practical process undertaken by other communities relative to the trust.

Jo Anne Preston asked about the recording from the virtual forum and the meeting materials. Erin responded that she is working on getting the video into a shareable format and that the meeting materials were posted with the agenda on the town's website per the requirements of Town Counsel to hold virtual meetings.

Karen made a motion to change references to Town Meeting to Select Board. Jonathan seconded the motion. Karen, Jonathan, Pam, Michelle, and Ben voted in the affirmative. Patricia voted that yes on the basis that no funds would be used to support 40B projects.

Len indicated that he would speak with the Select Board chair about scheduling the hearing with the Select Board.

The Committee scheduled another meeting for October 20 at 8 AM.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.