



Housing Plan Implementation Committee

Date: March 10, 2021

Time: 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

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

The first item on the agenda was to debrief from the informational forum that was held on March 4th. The forum was very well attended by HPIC members and Finance Committee members as well as the public. The panelists provided background on Somerville's and Concord's efforts to establish a real estate transfer fee in those communities as well as an overview of the local option effort. The recording of the forum is available. Erin reported that she received some follow up emails from realtors in particular and suggested that specific outreach is needed for the real estate community.

Erin asked whether others have any comment. Jonathan reiterated his preference to split the fee evenly between the buyer and the seller, and that he did not think it would prevent someone from purchasing or selling in Arlington. Karen noted that there is a job to do to build broad support for the effort. She also recommended that the HPIC look at other strategies to fund the affordable housing trust.

Erin announced that the Finance Committee will review the article on March 17th, but the Select Board had not yet scheduled their hearing. Erin indicated that she circulated a memo that provides an overview of the article. She would like the Committee to allow DPCD to submit the memo on their behalf.

Pam asked about attendance at precinct meetings as it a successful strategy to inform town meeting members about the article. Jenny noted that there are two candidate nights coming up for elected positions. The committee agreed that it is an important part of town meeting and the committee members should represent the effort at the precinct meetings. Erin indicated that the meetings have not been posted yet, but she would circulate the dates as soon as the meeting dates and times are known.

Turning back to the introductory memo, Erin went through each point in the memo and provided an overview of the format. Erin noted that the home rule petition asks for flexibility in an authorization of a range of percentages. It is aligned with the local option which sets the fee to be on transfers above the statewide median sale price of single-family homes and is aligned with the set of exemptions. The Committee at a previous

meeting decided to not apply an owner-occupancy exemption or an enhanced fee on speculative purchases. Should the home rule petition be authorized by the Legislature and be sent back to Arlington, that is time when the town needs to identify specific thresholds and numbers.

The Committee discussed whether the fee range should be limited at 1%. It was suggested that 2% may be too high to gain support and it might result in more funding that can actually be used effectively. On the other hand, the Committee acknowledged that having the revenue can fund active acquisition of property for affordable housing. Jenny noted that the conversation about the percentage fee that goes toward the CPA may be relevant. Pam indicated that the 1.5% was selected in order to have it passed. Ultimately, the Committee did not change the request for an authorization of a range in order to preserve flexibility.

The Committee noted that the memo should make a statement about the Committee about researching other options for trust revenue. Jenny indicated that it would be fine, but the Committee should be sensitive about implications for the future. The Committee discussed how the trust could be self-funded through revenue, as it was a concern from the Finance Committee from the November 2020 special town meeting. The Committee recognized that the Finance Committee was anticipating the real estate transfer fee following the special town meeting.

Erin indicated that she would review the real estate transfer fee materials with Jenny and send to the Finance Committee and Select Board.

The Committee then discussed relevant articles that will be reviewed. Erin noted that the Committee received a presentation from the petitioner proposing accessory dwelling units. Erin provided a quick overview of the article, indicated that the article meets the simple majority threshold authorized by the new legislation, and will be heard by the ARB on March 15th.

The next article discussed increases the percentage of inclusionary units in projects to 25%. Some members of the committee were supportive, yet others noted that the percentage may be too high to be financially feasible. It was noted that the existing inclusionary zoning bylaw has not created many affordable units. Jenny noted that inclusionary zoning works best with incentives and pointed out that the Housing Production Plan does recommend income targeting. Patricia recommended that the trust should purchase buildings to convert to affordable housing or stabilize as affordable housing.

Erin provided an overview of the industrial zoning article. Erin explained that the current industrial zoning does not allow residential in mixed use projects. Among other economic development and sustainability goals, the proposed amendment allows residential as a component of mixed use projects. Patricia indicated that residential should not be included in mixed use projects, unless for the creative and artist community. Jonathan noted that it seems appropriate to allow residential uses in mixed use buildings as there is not a specific industrial or commercial market for Arlington. He

thought it would bring flexibility. Pam noted that there is already quite a bit of residential uses in the industrial districts. Patricia stated that she thought that much of the land in Arlington is being land-banked for future residential.

Finally, the Committee discussed the teardown moratorium proposed by a citizen petitioner. Erin indicated that the teardown volume is low in Arlington. The Committee was interested in having a conversation around this topic as there may be some relatively affordable homeownership opportunities in the community. Jonathan noted that the cost of land in Arlington plays into why structures are torn down. The Committee discussed when there was a large boom of housing construction and whether the structures were well built.

The meeting summary from February 4 were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.