

Date: January 13, 2022

Time: 6:45 – 9:00pm

Location: Remote Participation, via Zoom

Agenda

- 1. Zoom Protocols, Review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols (5 mins)**
- 2. Presentation and Discussion with Arlington Veterans' Services Director, Jeff Chunglo (45 mins)**
- 3. DTG Business: Review of December minutes; Vote on revised letter to SB re: BLM Banner; other news (10-15 mins)**
- 4. Presentation and Discussion with Housing Plan Implementation Committee member and Arlington Housing Trust Fund Chair, Karen Kelleher (50-60 mins)**

Minutes: Taken by Elizabeth Dray and Tia Harrison

In attendance: Rebecca Gruber, Elizabeth Dray, Kellye Eversole, Kelda Fontenot, Lynette Culverhouse, Ileana Gatica Herrera, Louise B Popkin, Jeffrey Chunglo, Mona Mandel, Karen Kelleher, Christina Harrison, Patricia Worden, Shafaq Islam, call in, Don Seltzer, Jo Anne Preston, Barbara Thornton, Laura Kiesel, Julie Rioux, Steve Revilak

Agenda

- 1. Zoom Protocols were shared, the Mission Statement was reviewed, Group Meeting Protocols were read, and the Land Acknowledgement was read.**
- 2. Presentation and Discussion with Arlington Veterans' Services Director, Jeff Chunglo (45 mins) What does the Veteran's Council do in Arlington?**
 - i. Arlington residents received 4.13 million dollars of federal funding in 2021 (service related disability/pensions)**
 - ii. By law every community in MA (unusual among the States) must be serviced by a Veteran Service Officer - (VSO)**
 - iii. VSO roles -**
 - 1. Make sure they get their benefits**
 - a. State**
 - i. State annuity**
 - ii. Welcome home bonuses**

- iii. Burial services and cemetery plots
 - iv. Housing services
 - v. Employment/unemployment resources
 - vi. Property tax exemptions
 - b. Local
 - i. Food banks
 - ii. Fuel assistance
 - iii. Arlington Housing Authority
 - iv. Excise/property tax exemptions, etc
 - c. Federal
 - i. Pensions and service connected disability,
 - ii. Survivor benefits, widow's pension,
 - iii. Aid and attendance for assisted living or in home medical care,
 - iv. Non service related pensions
- 2. Help them enroll in healthcare
- 3. Questions re: GI Bill funds are referred to universities / colleges
- 4. Coordinate all local service related ceremonies and events
- 5. Chapter 115 - currently 40 recipients in Arlington
- 6. Houseless Veterans
 - a. 3 days emergency shelter in hotel
 - b. Refer to State resources
 - c. Difficult when veterans don't want help
- 7. Capacity to support non-English speakers
 - a. Contacts thru Board of Health, police department to get translators
 - b. Not a barrier to services
- 8. Property Tax Abatements
 - a. Surviving spouse or Seniors 70+ (Clause 17D)
 - b. Blind (Clause 37A)
 - c. Tax Deferral (Clause 41A)
 - i. 1.75% interest charge in re-payment of taxes
- 9. Case Example of utilizing federal, state, and local benefits to support a 70 y/o widow of WWII veteran.
 - a. \$1,168.53 monthly support benefits added
 - b. Enrollment in MassHealth Buy-In (saving her \$114)
 - c. \$333.03 additional each month from VA survivors benefits.
 - d. The funds from VA pension & Part B reduced the CH 115 expenses by \$447.03 per month
 - e. SNAP Benefits
 - f. Arlington continues to provide \$721.50 in Chapter

115 benefits per month. Of this amount, \$541.13 (75%) is reimbursed by the state. The overall expense by the town is \$180.37 per month.

10. Outreach? Ideas?

- a. One DTG member mentioned she would like to volunteer to teach yoga, meditation, and breathing techniques to veterans. Jeff mentioned that this could happen once the Community Center opens up.
- b. One DTG member asked about VFW, American Legion—what work is being done there? Low income? Idea about putting information out into the schools to outreach to children.
- c. Rotary club, Chamber of Commerce, and other outreach—but wanting to reach out to other communities in low-income housing and others.
- d. If you see a veteran in need—let them know there are services and to get in touch with their local VSD representative.
- e. One DTG member had an idea of a dinner or event for meet and greet. St Agnes's Parish once a month for coffee meet and greet (happening tomorrow, Friday 1/14). Will move to the community center when it opens

3. DTG Business: only had time for vote on revised letter to SB re: BLM Banner. Does anyone who has read it have a problem with it? No one commented or objected. Agreed that silence would be acceptance—no one raised any issues or concerns. The letter will be sent in time for next Select Board meeting, 1/24, and asked to be recognized as correspondence received.

4. Presentation and Discussion with Housing Plan Implementation Committee member and Arlington Housing Trust Fund Chair, Karen Kelleher. Ms. Kelleher's background: law school, worked for Housing and Urban Development, and moved back to Boston to work with various organizations—advocating against inequality, focusing on her interest to support low-income housing availability. Ms. Kelleher noted that regarding her description of the existing inventory of affordable housing that she has made a good faith effort to capture the facts, though not exhaustively researched, and that she has requested any corrections or clarifications noted be shared with her.

- a. Local Housing units
 - i. Section 8 vouchers
- b. Inclusionary zoning—15% affordability for developments with more than 6 units

- c. **CPA & CDBG Funds—resources to support low income housing projects**
- d. **Housing Corporation of Arlington**
- e. **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**
- f. **Real Estate Transfer Fee**
- g. **Accessory Dwelling Units**
- h. **Fair Housing Action Plan**
- i. **Preliminary target of \$7 million of ARPA funds to be spent on affordable housing in Arlington**
- j. **An attendee asked: Real Estate Transfer Fund percentage and base exclusion amount? Karen: Up to 2%-exclusion language statewide legislation-will look at website to clarify—next steps in process are not clear**
- k. **What affordable housing do we have?**
 - i. **713 units of Public Housing (AHA)**
 - 1. **Winslow Towers: 4 Winslow Street. 132 units**
 - 2. **Chestnut Manor: 54 Medford Street. 100 units**
 - 3. **Cusack Terrace 8 Summer Street. 67 units**
 - 4. **Menotomy Manor: Gardner Street....179 units**
 - 5. **Drake Village COMplex: Drake Road, Arlington Heights 144 units**
 - ii. **146 units Section 8: Project based: Historical per long term housing subsidy.**
 - iii. **150 Units Housing Corporation of Arlington**
 - 1. **This includes 48 new units at Downing Square Broadway. Initiative that was created with local support that leveraged mostly state and federal subsidies.**
 - 2. **Capitol Square 32 affordable units, 16 extremely affordable (with tenant vouchers attached to the building could help the affordability remaining)**
 - 3. **Westminster Ave 11 affordable units**
 - iv. **13 Units Chapter 40B**
 - 1. **Minuteman Village: Brattle Street: 16 Homeownerships units permitted under 40B, 4 affordable units**
 - 2. **Westminster: Westminster Ave: 9 units of affordable housing**
 - 3. **Two additional 40B projects, if built, would add 65 more affordable units, with no subsidy. 1165R Mass Ave and Thorndike Place**
 - v. **58 Units in Inclusionary Zoning**
 - 1. **Russell Place: 40 ownership units, 7 affordable units**
 - 2. **Avenue 264**
 - 3. **Arlington 360**
 - 4. **Brigham Square**
 - 5. **483 Summer Street**
 - a. **9 rental units, 1 affordable units**
 - 6. **882-892 Mass Ave**

- a. 21 rental units, 3 affordable units
- vi. Arlington Affordable Housing Trust Fund
 - 1. AHTF Trustees newly appointed
 - 2. Action Plan
 - 3. Public Engagement
- vii. Joanne Preston, AHA Board member, who was in attendance added more details:
 - 1. Low income for the Arlington Housing Authority: last year our average monthly rent was \$480 a month, based on one-third of the monthly income. AHA takes people directly from homeless shelters, veterans. AHA can take people who make higher incomes, up to 60% of AMI, but the reality is that the AHA takes quite low income people. AHA also runs the Housing Choice Program, which is Section 8. When people are awarded it, they can go anywhere. Most of them choose places in Arlington, and they can find rental housing at one third of their monthly income and that allows affordable housing to be put in different neighborhoods, not all in one place.
- viii. The Arlington Affordable Housing Trust Fund page on the Town website has additional information.
- ix. The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein is recommended reading. Or this short video:
<https://www.segregatedbydesign.com/>

Questions:

1. Why would a developer choose to go the 40B route? 40B allows the developer to essentially go higher, more density, go outside of the requirements of the zoning law. State Housing Committee can override the zoning appeals to give the developer the ability to have more flexibility.
2. A question about a project in Cambridge that used low income housing tax credits. What are they? They are a federal tool where the federal government allocates a certain amount of credits to every state in the union and then a state agency allocates them to developers to build affordable housing. If you don't have low income housing tax credits you are unlikely to be able to make it feasible. The tax credits are essentially provided to a private investor who puts cash in and funds part of the construction or the rehab, and the units do come with a use restriction that limits the affordable units to 60% of area median or below. It's not extremely low income but a lot of those units then get other layers of subsidy on them from State sources or Housing Choice Vouchers or some other way.
3. A question about creating low-income home ownership to encourage diversity. Really difficult to create affordable homeownership, and it's a simple reason there just aren't that many subsidy programs that bridge those gaps. You need to create ways to subsidize the difference between what a household can afford to purchase and pay back for the mortgage

payment. Of course in Arlington our home prices have been escalating astronomically, making it even harder. Older home ownership properties in Minuteman Village; four units are affordable. When that buyer sells the home, they need to sell it at a price that's affordable to someone who makes 80% of area median income. And so homeowners don't build a lot of equity. The Town probably does like a lottery to select the purchaser. There is now a State program that is subsidizing affordable homeownership, but it is targeted at low-income communities and communities of color, so a development in Arlington would not currently be eligible. It is possible to get a subsidy for a downpayment; things are changing.

4. A participant raised the point that very few one-bedroom and efficiency units are available in Arlington for the 31% of people reported to live alone.
5. Another participant raised the point about co-operative housing and co-housing in which renters buy their own building with financial assistance.
6. A participant raised the issue of too much sensitivity to the developers' profit instead of the focus being on the residents who are low-income and struggling. How do we center low income workers and residents who work just as hard but don't make as much money? We don't hear them in Town Meeting while we're talking about housing. It's one of the things I hope the Arlington Housing Trust Fund can do in the public engagement process, to really center those voices and create some more inclusive spaces that are specifically for the people who have the greatest need. Kathryn Levine Einstein at the Boston University AntiRacism Center is doing research on just this question of inclusion of underrepresented voices. She's done some work designing a process to create outreach spaces, specifically for renters, for disabled people, for seniors, for the groups that they were trying to serve.
7. A participant asked a question about encouraging non-profit development by simplifying the permit process? Developers will be more apt to work with us if the permit process is set. To create permanent flexibility, one thing we might consider is what they have in Cambridge, which is an affordable housing overlay.