



Housing Committee Town of Chilmark

MEETING NOTES - FINAL **December 21, 2023 (via ZOOM)**

Present for the Housing Committee and attending the Zoom meeting were Jim Feiner – Chair, Ann Wallace, Allison Cameron Parry, Peter Cook, Nettie Kent Ruel and Alison Kisselgof - Administrator. Also in attendance were David Vigneault, Laura Silber and Jeffrey DuBard.

Bill Rossi was not in attendance.

The meeting started at 9:02 AM.

APPROVAL OF DRAFT MINUTES: A motion was made to accept the draft minutes from 11/16/23 as written. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

MIDDLE LINE ROAD FY2025 BUDGET REVIEW: David Vigneault of the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA) attended the meeting to go over the Middle Line Road (MLR) proposed budget for FY2025. Terri Keech was away and could not attend the meeting.

David explained that Terri used averages from previous years and then adds in any known major expenses expected to create the FY2025 budget.

Jim offered that the budget looked straightforward and asked if the debt service was included in this budget or it is recorded elsewhere. David said that MLR's bond was tracked outside of the management budget.

David said that rental income might be higher than expected if any units get rented to tenants with higher AMIs. DCRHA now has a waiting list for residents with AMIs higher than 100% and he suggested the Town designate 1 or 2 units at 100% AMI or above. David mentioned that he is not seeing many applications for residents at higher AMIs.

Allison supported designating some MLR rentals at higher AMIs and suggested outreach to increase awareness. She offered that rental rates for higher AMIs is still less than market rate.

David said that year round rental rates on island are still very high and are comparable to mortgage payments in other areas. He mentioned the last vacant MLR rental was offered to several higher AMI residents who declined and the new tenant was at 80% AMI.

Allison asked if any MLR tenants are in arrears. David answered that DCRHA has been lucky in the past with no late rents but currently has two units in arrears – one with a claim on it and the other just given a notice.

Ann asked if David could speak to DCRHA administrative costs for Chilmark in the next year. David said that there was a 2.1% increase overall but that Chilmark's percentage actually dropped and therefore has a small increase over last year's total.

A motion was made to accept the MLR FY2025 budget as presented. The motion was seconded and passed by unanimous approval.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 HOUSING COMMITTEE BUDGET APPROVAL: With no discussion offered, a motion was made to approve the CHC FY2025 budget and seconded. All members voted in favor so the motion passed.

UPCOMING TESTIMONY REQUEST: Laura Silber from the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) asked to speak at the meeting to inform the Committee of upcoming needed testimony. Laura said that the first hearing for the Affordable Homes Act, which supports a transfer fee and a seasonal communities designation, is on January 18th. She requested that the CHC recommend to the Select Board to send testimony and said a template would be circulated. Laura also said that the CHC and individual members could send their own letter of support and asked that members spread the word to others - the more testimony that can be sent, the better. Laura said that Allison could help coordinate as liaison to the Housing Bank. Laura mentioned that she would be testifying in person at the hearing.

A motion was made to recommend the Select Board send written testimony for the hearing in support of the legislation and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Laura mentioned that the seasonal community designation would be critical to get municipal housing approved.

A motion was made for the Committee to send written testimony for the hearing. The motion was seconded and passed by unanimous approval.

EXCISE WARRANT LANGUAGE DISCUSSION: Prior to the meeting, Alison requested and received a wording recommendation for the excise increase warrant article from Laura. Laura's suggestion including breaking up original warrant into two – one for the increase and one for the allocation. Alison circulated these draft warrant articles to the Committee members for discussion at this meeting.

Jim offered the language was consistent with what the Committee had previously discussed but he wondered if it should be on a pilot basis. He recounted Bill's concern about continued use of the increase in funds without subsequent review. Laura suggested sending the wording to town counsel. Ann thought it would be best to send the warrant articles to the Select Board who could develop them more and then have town counsel review. Ann offered that she did not support changing the allocation annually. Laura mentioned that the language as written was for a one time allocation. Peter said that adding the word "annually" would indicate that a review would occur. There was a discussion about where funds would be allocated and the consensus was that it should to the Molly Flender Affordable Housing Trust.

Allison asked if language should be added to tie the two warrant articles together. Laura offered that legally the two articles could not be tied together so the town would have to internally agree to combine them. She went on

to say that the excise revenue does not have its own fund and so it would need to be allocated somewhere. Laura said that this is why town counsel needed to be consulted. She mentioned that West Tisbury and Nantucket had already experienced this issue.

After some further discussion, it was decided that the draft wording was adequate and it was expected that the Select Board would adjust the warrant articles. A motion was made to send the draft warrant articles to the Select Board as written. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Jeffrey asked if this warrant would have to be voted on annually. Laura answered that this was a question for town counsel.

PEAKED HILL PASTURES RFP COMMITTEE UPDATE: Peter filled the Committee in on the progress of the Peaked Hill Pastures (PHP) RFP Committee's progress.

Peter said that the consultant Judi Barrett had written a draft RFP but was not able to finish the work. He and fellow PHP RFP Committee member Fred Khedouri worked together to finish the draft. The PHP RFP Committee finalized the RFP as best they could but there are still some wording that needs to be added with guidance from the Select Board and town counsel. Peter mentioned that there are some complications like the fact that the Town wants the AMI for rental units to be up to 150% and the possibility of letting Homesite winners choose between you-build and turnkey. He also said that the Planning Board was still pursuing a by-law change that would allow 10 units, as opposed to the 9 allowed by the current by-law. Peter said that infrastructure issues were mostly solved and the RFP is pretty much ready to go. He offered that funding options would start to be clarified once the RFP is released and some responses are received.

Ann added that the RFP is complicated and may not fully follow what the town voted on which concerns her.

It was mentioned that there would be a joint meeting of the PHP RFP Committee and the Select Board in January and that Housing Committee members should attend.

Laura asked about the inclusion of 40B. Peter answered that there is still a question about whether any of the rentals would be designated as affordable (i.e. 80% AMI or lower) and therefore whether 40B could be used. Laura mentioned that a municipal housing mechanism like the one included in the Affordable Homes Act may allow the Town to participate in 40B even with no designated affordable housing units. Peter offered that it is expected that potential developers would bring up 40B and its usage could be decided then. Laura said that the discussion usually starts at the town level in her experience. Peter said that he expects this topic to be part of the joint meeting discussion with the Select Board.

PLACEMATE CHILMARK ASSESSMENT: Jim said that he had spoken with Kai Frolich, one of the co-founders of Placemate, about their Lease to Locals program. Kai had sent a preliminary assessment for Chilmark, which Alison shared on screen. The concept is that the town would subsidize the difference in rent between short term and long term rentals in an effort to retain year round housing and lower the number of short term rentals.

Jim offered that the program was for new rental situations, not for ones already in place. Laura said that the program involves Placemate doing all the legwork of talking to landlords and a publicity campaign, which is why they charge an administrative fee for the program.

Jim asked if it made sense to pay someone else to do this kind of work or the Town do the work itself. Laura said that some communities have used Placemate to start a program and then the Town took over, while others have opted to let Placemate continue management. Laura offered that their proposal which would create 10 rental units for ~\$200,000 seemed like a bargain. Jeffrey asked if the \$200,000 was an annual amount and wondered what happened if someone dropped out of the program. Laura answered that the amount is for a one year commitment and that Placemate has a fairly good renewal rate somewhere in the range of 60-70%. She said that this program is another option to create housing but it's supplemental and not a replacement for other projects. Jim asked if rental caps are based on affordable housing AMIs. Laura said that the Town would decide the parameters. Jim was concerned that Town residents would feel this was a big ask since it would be on top of the rental assistance program but he was open to the idea. Ann asked for a copy of the assessment and to invite Placemate to present at the next meeting.

TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED: None

DOCUMENTS:

FY2025 Middle Line Road Budget

FY2025 Housing Committee Budget

Excise Increase Draft Warrant Articles

Placemate Lease to Locals Chilmark Assessment

Draft minutes from the 11/16/23 meetings

NEXT POSSIBLE MEETING: January 18, 2024 @ 9:00 AM

With no further business to conduct the meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by Alison Kisselgof, Board Administrator.