



# Housing Committee

## Town of Chilmark

### **MEETING NOTES - APPROVED**

#### **February 15, 2024 (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, Bill Rossi and Alison Kisselgof - Administrator. Also in attendance were Laura Silber, Fred Khedouri and Lindsey Scott.

The meeting started at 9:01 AM.

**HOUSING ZONING ANALYSIS STAKEHOLDER SESSION:** Laura Silber from the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) reminded members about the Joint Affordable Housing Group meeting on February 21<sup>st</sup> where Barrett Planning Group would be launching the update to affordable housing and zoning analysis study. Laura said that it would be a more useful meeting if all towns had representatives present and weighed in with their concerns or questions about current zoning. She requested that a member of the Committee attend as well as a member of the Chilmark Planning Board. Laura offered that the Planning Board member could communicate information from the meeting to the Select Board. She also suggested that ZBA members attend.

Laura said that the Complete Neighborhoods grant application had been delayed due to Mass Housing Partnership staff illness and was just now beginning. She expected a status report by the first week of March.

**HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN:** Laura said that she sent out an email about the Housing Production Plans (HPPs). The MVC is working on state grants to fund updates for the towns. Laura mentioned that she was not in her current role with the MVC the last time the HPPs were updated but she had heard it was difficult. Laura wanted to make sure that all the towns are fully invested in the process and that she will be supporting the process to make it easier this time.

Laura offered that the 2024 housing needs assessment was wrapping up and a rough draft is expected in the next and a final version to share with everybody in the first week of March.

Peter asked what the procedure would be to update the HPP. Laura answered that the respondent to the Request for Quote (RFQ) would give guidance on the process since they would be an expert on the HPPs. Peter mentioned that the participation was low in meetings for the last HPP update and he wondered how to get more participation. Laura said that she could work with the town to make sure the information gets out and she hoped that the Select Board would be more involved in the process this time. Bill asked that Laura make sure the Select Board adds a discussion to their agenda. Laura said she would do so.

**PEAKED HILL PASTURES RFP UPDATE AND DISCUSSION:** Since the last Committee meeting, the Peaked Hill Pastures (PHP) RFP Committee had presented a draft RFP and a few questions to the Select Board at a joint meeting on 1/16/24. The Select Board answered the questions posed and asked that the PHP RFP Committee release the RFP in a timeframe that would allow for a warrant at the annual town meeting. Jim had written a letter to the Select Board regarding the PHP RFP Committee and the RFP, which expressed his personal position, but suggested that the Committee discuss the topic at this meeting as well.

Jim started by saying that PHP was the last large parcel owned by the town that could be developed and that he had hoped the project would represent the long-term interests of the town. He said that the RFP addresses several objectives that the town residents had asked for but that the rental portion of the project presents some issues. Jim offered that the rentals could have been addressed in a different way and mentioned the need for 40B or zoning changes so that the entire property was not encumbered, which in his mind was the biggest issue. Jim said that town residents supported creating rentals and he was concerned the RFP as written is not financially feasible. He wondered if splitting the project into two phases would be appropriate so that the homesites could be built immediately with the rentals completed at a later date.

Bill responded as a member of the Select Board. He said that town counsel had been consulted and opined that a portion of the property would still be available for future uses if the PHP development was built as planned. Bill added that the future uses for the property are unknown. He said that he had confidence in the PHP RFP Committee's work and acknowledged that concessions needed to be made from the original warrant on two issues, density and eligibility, due to information learned after the town resident's voted. Bill acknowledged that there were funding constraints but expected that respondents to the RFP would shed some light on financing options.

Peter said that the RFP is in current version was somewhat of a wish list. He offered that the PHP RFP Committee tried to stay as close to the original warrant as possible. Peter said that he expected that developers who replied to the RFP would present funding options available as well as clarify other questions about the project. He mentioned that it was a lengthy process and appreciated working with the other members of the PHP RFP Committee.

Fred said that people would be more comfortable with the decisions made regarding PHP once legal counsel advises on the RFP language but that it was his understanding that a significant portion of the land would still be available for future development. He agreed with Peter that developer responses to the RFP would help clarify some unknowns. Fred touched upon some misconceptions and usage of the 40B statute. He said that more information would be available once there were detailed plans and that issues would be addressed at town meeting. Fred offered that town counsel has defined some clear paths forward for the project and reminded everyone that the original warrant article represented a compromise to begin with. He said that the RFP process has been difficult but that everyone was working towards the same goal and had the town's interest in mind.

Jim said that financing for the rentals was still unknown and he was unclear of the process moving forward. Fred offered that the RFP is not prescriptive about financing and that developers are expected to come up with financing options. He mentioned that there is no presumption in the RFP that the town will be funding the project, that the town's bond limits will go away over time and that grants to support the project were being explored. Fred mentioned that there may be less interest by developers in the PHP project because of its relatively small scale.

Alison asked if either Fred or Lindsey could speak to recent developments in the project. Lindsey offered to briefly go over this information. She said that once the Select Board approved the RFP, the PHP RFP Committee had completed its work. Lindsey said that a new implementation group would be formed to complete the next steps. She mentioned that there was always desire to have a consultant involved and, although the first attempt to hire one did not work out, Ann Silverman had been hired to help finish the RFP and assist with funding and other concerns that had been raised. Lindsey said that the timeframe set out by the Select Board was not feasible and the project would need to be presented at a later date.

Fred added that Tim Carroll is the town's procurement officer and is now in charge of the RFP process. He said that there would have to be engagement with a developer before being brought to the town meeting.

Bill said that the town is not prohibited from further borrowing but would lose its AAA rating and pay higher interest rates if more bonds were taken out. He offered that it would be up to the town residents to vote on whether any further borrowing would happen to support the PHP project.

**LEASE TO LOCALS DISCUSSION:** Jim asked if everyone had seen the Lease to Locals presentation from the last meeting. Bill had not. Jim said that the program is similar to the rental assistance program (RAP) already in place but that Placemate would manage the program with subsidies from the town. Bill was interested in getting more information. Alison offered that the big difference between the Lease to Locals program and RAP is that RAP is limited to certain AMIs whereas Lease to Locals would not have AMI limits and be basing rents on short term rental rates. Alison mentioned that the Chilmark specific Lease to Locals program was based on \$200,000, which was close to the expected revenue generated by raising the excise tax from 4 to 6%, and that the proposal expected 10-11 rental units could be unlocked with these funds. Alison said that the town would pay the difference between a short term rental and a year-round rental. She offered that the proposal was for a pilot program that, if successful, the town could take over.

Ann suggested that the Committee discuss at a later meeting once everyone had seen the presentation.

**PRO-HOUSING ADVOCACY DATA TOOLS DISCUSSION:** Links to pro-housing advocacy tools were distributed prior to the meeting but not discussed.

**DISCUSSION ON ADJUSTING RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RENTS:** Nettie said that the rental assistance program (RAP) rents have not be increased since 2018 and shared that she was in danger of losing her housing if the rents are not increased.

Alison offered that she and Ann had met to discuss rental increase recommendations. The current rents are well below the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA)'s current rental rates at 80% AMI. Alison said that she had met with Ann to figure out new rates but were not sure whether the rates should match DCRHA's current rates at 100% AMI or not.

There was a discussion about rents over 100% AMI, which members found to be high. Alison explained that the formula for deciding rents is to divide 30% of household income by 12. She said that this makes sense for AMIs below 100% because it is prevent people from spending too much income on rent. For people with AMIs over 100%, this formula doesn't work as well because it can't be assumed that 30% of income will be used towards

rent.

In the interest of time, Jim suggested that this discussion continue at the next meeting with a summary of RAP rates and DCRHA rates. He also mentioned that Nettie would need to recuse herself from the vote on this topic.

**TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED:** None.

**APPROVAL OF DRAFT MINUTES:** Minutes were not prepared in time for this meeting and will be approved at the next meeting.

**DOCUMENTS:**

2/6/24 Jim Feiner email to Select Board regarding PHP

**NEXT POSSIBLE MEETING:** March 21, 2024 @ 9:00 AM

With no further business to conduct the meeting adjourned at 10:18 AM.

Respectfully submitted by Alison Kisselgof, Board Administrator.