



TOWN OF IPSWICH

IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS 01938

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board &
Ipswich Housing Partnership Joint Meeting
Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2023 7:30 am
Meeting Room C

Ipswich Housing Partnership Attendees: Charlie Allen, John Doonan, Carl Gardner, Binni Hackett, Michael Jones, Stacey Pedrick, Ken Redford, Patsy Valcour, Jim Warner

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board Attendees: Jim Warner, Binni Hackett, Michael Jones, Sarah Player, Michael Schaaf

Other/Guests:

Staff: Mark Godin, Glenn Gibbs

Call to Order: Quorum established for the IHP+AHTFB at 7:30 am.

Citizen Queries: None

Vote to approve Minutes of 5-11-23 Meeting: The 5-11-23 Meeting minutes were approved by both the IHP and AHTFB with the following correction under the 21 Leslie Rd. discussion: "Allen states the IHA is willing to sell the parcel for \$210K to Habitat."

Property Updates:

21 Leslie Rd.

Allen informed the group that the state has added an RFP process to the law that allows Housing Authorities to sell land and retain the proceeds. This will not necessarily derail the sale of 21 Leslie Rd by the IHA for affordable use, but will unfortunately slow the process. The RFP process may be completed by the end of June with help from Mass. Housing Partnership.

Doonan stated that he has met with directors from Mass Housing Finance who are offering funding and expertise through their Planning for Housing Production grant program focused on pre-development. Funds may be used for site work or other aspects of projects. They are eager to work with us. Doonan will review the information and disseminate it to the group by email.

161 Topsfield Rd.

Gibbs informed the group that the Town has allocated funds to perform an updated wetlands delineation. This may have taken place already or will happen soon. Also, a phase 1 environmental assessment will be needed and may occur within the next few weeks. The cost for this is approx. \$2K and Gibbs believes the Town will cover this cost. Schaaf inquired about the disposition of the Select Board (SB) regarding Topsfield Rd. Player stated she is not sure where all members of the SB stand on use of this property, but believes a number of members have an ongoing commitment to affordable housing. Player reiterated her commitment to be a vocal advocate on the SB for affordable housing.

Elm St.

Player stated that discussion on the SB regarding the Elm St. property is on hold and contingent on finalized plans for the Public Safety building. The re-use committee is also on pause. She also stated that the SB remains interested in seeing the property developed for affordable housing. Gardner stated that a 21E environmental review will be required for change use of the property. Player responded that the SB is not ready to entertain any action relative to the site and suggests holding on any inquiries to the SB. Warner mentioned that community support will be important and the Coburn Trust is very interested to be involved and willing to help build interest in the project. Redford asked about what the process will be for decision making going forward and also about the role of the sub-committee. Player responded that the SB will decide on what happens to the property, and that the sub-committee has an advisory role. The sub-committee or work group will likely be re-constituted at some point, but is formally on hold.

Engaging Citizens on Affordable Housing:

Player referenced the 3A Task Force and its work on the next phase of engaging citizens on 3A and affordable housing issues. The task force is discussing the idea of a “housing institute” that would provide information to citizens about a number of affordable housing topics, including 3A. The IHP and AHTFB could collaborate with the 3A task force in this regard. Allen suggested that Harborlight Homes (HH) could also participate and play a role. This could help maintain their interest in Elm St. Player noted the HH Housing Stewards program that she plans to attend in July and August. The program’s goal is to provide more in depth education to community housing advocates.

Strategy Questions and Discussion:

Allen presented a list of strategy questions for discussion:

Q1: Are the Ipswich Housing Partnership (Partnership) and Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board (Trust) willing to act as a principal for specific housing developments/opportunities? How much risk would the Partnership and Trust be willing to take financially and operationally?

Redford voiced concern about the Trust owning and maintaining a property as inventory due to risk of the project being delayed. He offered support for the Trust playing a transitional ownership role when there is an active developer involved to move the project forward. Gardner suggested there should be a list of properties that are identified and then prioritized as potential sites. He shared housing inventory figures from the Assessor’s office that show how many units per family size are in town and suggested this data could help with identifying opportunities. Most members voiced agreement with the concept of the Trust having initial ownership of properties, but that active partners such as Habitat and Harborlight also be involved early on to manage the development process. There was consensus that the Partnership and Trust need to be poised to act more quickly on opportunities.

Redford emphasized that the Town needs many more affordable units and that the priority for use of Trust Fund monies should be providing funding for bigger projects with 40 units or more. Allen suggested that smaller projects are more readily available but this would not preclude the Trust from pursuing large projects. Warner emphasized the importance of the Trust Fund and Partnership having oversight of projects and associated financing in order to manage risk. This role may require more resource than currently available through the affordable housing coordinator role.

Allen summed up the discussion by suggesting that the model would be a hybrid that allows the trust to both act as a principal and partner with developers and builders. Allen requested volunteers for a small working group to further develop financing strategies for the Trust acting as a principal. Gardner, Doonan, and Schaaf volunteered to be on this sub-group.

Q2: Should the Partnership and Trust act as a lender to for land acquisition and pre-development costs?

Allen offered that the Trust should not be providing pre-development loans to builders and that non-profit developers should have their own sources of pre-development funding. Redford suggested that funds could be used to help with legal fees that developers might incur in developing a property. Schaaf responded that legal issue outcomes and costs are hard to predict. Jones voiced support for using funds for land acquisition but the Trust should not act as a lender. Allen agreed to put together a synopsis of how the Trust would approach land acquisition and pre-development costs outside of offering loans.

Q3: What efforts should be made to secure additional funding for affordable housing?

Allen outlined opportunities for additional funding including such as affordable housing bonds and community preservation programs. Allen also noted that the track record on initiating and sponsoring these sources has been lacking. Gibbs suggested that using available funds to demonstrate success on projects is a higher priority than pursuing additional funding sources. Allen brought up short term rental tax funds as a potential source of funds for affordable housing. The funds are currently being used for the Town's General funds and would require a Town meeting vote to re-direct them for another purpose. There was consensus from the group that the focus should be primarily on using currently available Trust Fund money with consideration of other funding sources as appropriate.

Allen suggested the formation of another working group to develop ancillary financing sources.

Doonan, Player, Redford volunteer to be on this group.

Q4: Should the Partnership and Trust promote the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)?

Gibbs noted that the Planning Board (PB) is considering 2 potential zoning articles for the fall Town Meeting. One relates to ADUs and the other to accessory apartments. Ipswich has over 80 accessory apartments that have been created since the late 1990s. Steps have been taken over time to improve the program. Proposed changes would (1) allow an increase in the size of an accessory apartment and (2) end the requirement that the owner live in the building that has an accessory unit. Other ideas could also be considered including expanding zoning for accessory apartments beyond the IR district to the RA district. Gibbs suggested that support for these changes from the Partnership and Trust will be important. Warner suggested there should be a liaison from this group to the PB which would include attendance at PB meetings. Player noted that these zoning items will also be presented to the SB and Gibbs plans to have them finalized ahead of that presentation. Gibbs also noted that there could be language that home owners could access money from the Trust fund if they agree to an affordable housing restriction when creating accessory units. Allen suggested that actively promoting accessory unit development would be pending until the potential zoning changes are decided, and that a volunteer to attend the PB meeting(s) should be happen soon.

Q5: Should there be effort to inventory existing smaller scale multi-family properties with consideration for conversion to affordable housing?

This topic has been included under discussion of the other bullet points.

Additional Items:

Player and Toni Mooradd, PB Chair, will connect on development projects and properties to consider affordable housing opportunities.

Don Greenough will not be continuing on the IHP beyond his current term which ends 6/20/23. Potential new IHP board members include Marie Temple and Kim Folan.

New Business:

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Thurs. July 13th at 7:30 AM.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:00 am.

Minutes prepared by Mark Godin

Minutes adopted: July 13, 2023