

**Housing Committee
Town of Pelham
Meeting Minutes for February 2, 2021**

Meeting conducted remotely via Zoom

Approved: 

Committee Members in Attendance:

Tilman Lukas, Ruth Elcan, Amy Spalding-Fecher, Gail Kenny, Jim Lumley, Barbara Cooper

Guests in Attendance: Lexi Dewey

Meeting called to order at: 4:34 p.m. by Tilman

Minutes Approved:

Minutes of November 10, 2020 Motion to approve Ruth, seconded Gail, all approved
Minutes of January 2, 2021 will be reviewed at the March meeting.

Votes Taken: None

Action Items: Barbara to bring housing assistance need issue to CPC

Committee Discussion Topics:

First Time Homebuyer's program: Tilman informed the committee that Valley CDC agreed to extend the contract until June 30, 2021. Valley said that they have several eligible buyers that are looking at Pelham and Amherst. The problem is that there are no houses within the affordable level in Pelham.

8 Amherst Rd.

Eversource is cutting some of the trees on Amherst Road at the site.

Amethyst Brook Apartments:

Conservation Commission will be considering the hiring of a peer consultant for review of ABA at their next meeting on Thurs 2/4 at 10am.

The Conservation Commission will hold their next meeting on 2/11/21 at 7:00 p.m. Tilman recommends that HC members attend. Agenda includes a continuation of CC review of ABA. May have initial comments of Peer consultant

40B: HCDCI is waiting for a revised Site Eligibility letter from DHCD stating that the project is eligible for funding. The original letter had to be modified when the Petersen house was added to project. Once they have the letter, they are planning on submitting 40B Comprehensive Permit application to the Pelham ZBA.

CPC funds for Housing Assistance for current residents:

BC: How do you get technical help and funding for assessment of needs? Housing needs study needs an update. Should we do an updated study? Cost might be around \$6,500.

JL: Assessor may have a list of townspeople who need help, identifying people who have financial needs. Town monitors this. Chair of Assessors is Rusty Rowell.

ASF: Someone from the HC should contact chair of board of assessors.

BC: A study would be more professional than hearing through neighbors etc.

RE: Council of Aging might be a good source.

BC: We need to determine need and it should be in the purview of CPC. Barbara to talk to Cyd at next CPC meeting. CHAPA (Citizen's Housing and Planning Association), meeting had section on who/how to determine need. No social service or religious person in Pelham to play this role. CHAPA had no real answers either.

TL: Kathy Martell has good sense of what is needed in certain areas.

TL: Cyd is talking about creating a CPA program that supports those who need financial support to stay in homes. We need to figure out what the population is that might need this.

TL: Shall I set up a meeting with Council of Aging? This is not so much a demographic issue as it is a financial eligibility.

RE: When does the current national census get published? Will that tell us anything?

BC: May not be certified until February, not sure how helpful that will be.

RE: Housing needs study based somewhat on Census, then followed up with another document. Housing needs study had a lot of detail/numbers related to cost-burdened residents

JL: Might be helpful to talk to Connie Kruger to see if she can update study and how he got this information.

ASF: Should all of this be occurring at the CPC rather than the HC?

HC: Members agree to support CPC funding for a housing need study.

BC: Getting a new needs study is critical for our agenda as a committee.

Sidewalks:

TL: Thinking of ways we can take discussion further, gets complicated quickly because any funding source at state level requires a fair amount of pre-development work including things like engineering surveys, traffic studies, cost studies. Is it our responsibility? Seems to be more along the lines of Planning and Select Board. Would be good to have a town committee to look at this at the larger level. Planning and Select board are where this should start.

BC: Mass. Dept. of Transportation has a webinar called "Safe Routes to Schools" coming up tomorrow.

RE: The link seems to indicate that there is funding available to do the preliminary work.

ASF: would be good to have this spearheaded before ABA gets underway so that they can include and support this endeavor.

RE: The Habitat for Humanity houses will also be a contributing factor towards need for sidewalks as they are multi-bedroom houses.

Housing choice program:

TL: I emailed HC copy of Act signed by Governor regarding Housing Choice. Has significant changes to law in regards to changes in planning and zoning. Complicated. Some parts apply to Pelham, many do not.

BC: sent out document today highlighting Zoning Changes at State level.

Simple majority vote by TM is all that is required for a certain number of cases in certain zoning areas, including certain types of housing that are now permitted as of right, multi-family housing or mixed use only require simple majority (instead of 2/3 votes). Things that require special permit also only require majority vote: confusing as not clear when it would come before planning board? Includes increase in density.

TL: This is referring to new bylaw, not existing...

Also increases requirement to threshold for objectors to 2/3 majority

TL: Changes how zoning is used and enforced in MA, here the intent is to create more housing and affordable housing. Zoning restrictions have hampered housing development in MA.

HC: had additional discussion regarding this legislation.

JL: Real Estate values are going through roof and there isn't enough housing supply.

Only house that seems to be affordable might be the Doubleday house on Harkness Rd.

Motion to adjourn Ruth, seconded by Gail. Meeting adjourned at 5:50.

Next meeting March 2, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Spalding-Fecher

References:

ABA: Amethyst Brook Apartments (20-22 Amherst Road)

ANR: Approval not Required

CC: Conservation Commission

CDBG: (Community Development Block Grant)

CPC: Community Preservation Committee

DHCD: MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development

HC: Housing Committee

HD: Highway Department

H4H: Habitat for Humanity

HCDI: Home City Development Inc .

PB: Planning Board

ZB: Zoning Board