

**Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Affordable Housing Committee, Town of Oak Bluffs, held on Tue Jan 3rd 2023 at 4.30pm at Rm 110 Town Hall.**

**Present:**

K. Mark Leonard, Chair  
Jim Bishop  
Peter Bradford  
Mark Crossland  
Katherine Donahue

**Attending:**

Robert Tankard, MV Veterans Affairs  
Anita Botti  
Joe McQuillan  
Keith McGuire, IHT  
Maura McGroarty, Finance  
Peter Graham, Consultant to Cape & Islands Veterans  
Jim Seymour, Cape & Islands  
Dave Berube, Cape & Islands  
Linda Call, resident  
William Burke  
Mike Dunford  
Bill Blaisdell  
David Vigneault, DCRHA

**1. Call to order**

Chair Mark Leonard called the meeting to order at 4.32pm.

**2. Minutes of the meeting**

of Nov 15<sup>th</sup> 2022 had one correction – to the correction previously noted on item no.2. As Peter Bradford said, the original error should have been corrected to ‘Panola’ and not ‘Panover’. So noted by the Secretary. Jim Bishop queried the issue. Peter explained re Oak Ave/Panola lots that have Title flaws, Town owned; the person with interest in these Lots will release them to the Town for 5K; if we clear the issue it would mean 2 more Lots available, possibly for Habitat.

Minutes as amended were accepted, as proposed by Peter Bradford, seconded by Katherine Donahue, and approved of by members present at that meeting. Jim and Mark Crossland abstained.

**3. Chair’s Updates**

3.1 The update on Noyes will be held to a later part of the meeting for David Vigneault to be present.

3.2 The RFP on the Veteran’s housing project has been posted. The site visit has been scheduled for 10am this Thursday. And this evening we will discuss pertinent issues with IHT.

**4. Veteran’s Housing**

*Note: what follows is abbreviated and paraphrased, though tied as closely as possible to the original, subject to what the members present accept/change; the objective is always to make intended meaning clear.*

4.1 preliminary issues – Mark Crossland asked about survey work done on Bellevue, since that precedes septic planning work; Peter Bradford said that it has yet to be surveyed; Chair noted that with Habitat for Humanity, they set up the surveys, so it can be a developer function. That is still in ‘pending’ status for us. Chair’s question to IHT as developer is about the kind of unit design they have in mind? Do we stay with a transitional format? or switch as some have indicated, from a studio to a bedroom design? or do a mix of both?

Jim Bishop said that it is of critical importance that the developer understand development from an applicant perspective. There is often a third of applicants who get rejected out of hand. Costs exceed their ability to respond. The opportunity the RFP presents provides a net for those in need of affordable housing. Would the IHT rep comment?

4.2 In response, Keith McGuire said that IHT would look for funding that would match the stipulations of the RFP so that IHT could execute according to RFP objectives.

4.3 Peter Graham mentioned vouchers, explaining that if there are no project vouchers, an applicant with an income of more than 30% AMI but less than 80% AMI, might still not qualify for a project. If they do qualify, they can end up being ‘rent burdened’ (i.e. paying 80% of their income to rent). The vouchers assist. So, when an RFP goes out to assist a targeted area of applicants, the voucher aspect is a critical essential.

4.4 Jim Bishop cited examples of the above from real life situations and made 2 points: that ‘tenant shifting’ (people who are not the original renters) should not happen; and that there is a tendency for developers to spend excessively on construction materials.

4.5 Peter Graham cited a need for mention in the RFP about vouchers; and perhaps about the levels of income it serves; such information can generate a diversity of applicants; with a small number of units being offered, it becomes important to identify the Veterans with greatest need on the Vineyard.

4.6 Chair noted that the Cape & Islands projects use Voucher assistance; both Peter Bradford and Jim Bishop wondered if there was a way to get the developer to offer Voucher assistance to applicants? Jim’s further question on this was that if IHT wins the bid, who will manage the project? Jim also said that the RFP had followed the format of that used by the Cape and the Islands Veteran’s Association. Mark Crossland thought we should use a mix of both studio and 1 bedroom units.

4.7 Peter G: in a small project that covers less than 20 units, it is important to pinpoint  
a. permanent design and b. the income mix possible; the State can provide Voucher assistance for a specific percentage of applicants.

4.8 Jim Seymour: on the use of ‘transition’ when referring to a program within a housing project (ie the program is different from and exists in the building); and on ‘permanent’ in contrast, referring to different housing program unit models; in general, ‘transition’ refers to a period of 1-2 years with an expectation of moving on; while ‘permanent and supportive’ indicates a residence of some 3-5 years.

4.9 Mark Crossland: do we have to give term limits for applicants? And did we identify a specific type of unit design in the RFP?

4.10 Chair: we didn't give residency time/term limits in the RFP; and the language used referred to a 'Veterans Supportive Housing Program'; it was approved at Town Meeting. Jim & Peter: it can be permanent.

4.11 Maura McGroarty: Have we got a total number for the persons thus far identified as being in need? Also, in these projects, the Town is allocating real estate to specific programs; while costs for social services are often covered by the Town, the program serves the entire Vineyard;

4.12 Chair: we have identified 16 persons in need thus far; to clarify about services, there will be no services on site; the area will be kept residential; care management and transport will be covered by the Veterans Association. 'Thanks' from Maura noted.

4.13 Peter B and Jim B: our understanding of 'transitional' has no specified time limit.

4.14 Peter G: helpful to define 'transition' in accordance with funding mechanisms that apply.

4.15 Dave Berube: when we talk 'transitional/permanent' it is always in relation to programing; but in discussing Affordable Housing, terms used can have different meaning and application; 'transition/transitional' is always defined by program goals.

Dave also shared that there are 22 Veteran suicides a day and that these incidents have often included elements of a loss of mission and of hope; programs and housing for Veterans are always in the context of moving on to the next phase or level, as in 'transitioning into.'

4.16 Peter B: it comes down to what we want to see in this RFP on permanent housing and stability, unlike projects where there are deadlines, and residents really don't have a place to move on to.

4.17 Chair: we have not used fixed deadlines or definitions; and the developer can work on raising the funding for project costs.

4.18 Linda Call: So then 'transitional' means? And if anything changes, we (abutters) will continue to get to be part of the decision-making process?

4.19 Chair: we will keep the abutters posted as we figure out the questions; and there are no timelines on our understanding of residency.

4.20 Peter B: we've never talked about temporary housing; but rather, our focus has been on 'transitioning' back to civilian life as a process that is not time limited ie permanent housing with transitional services. Mark Crossland adds: and we can have them seek renewal every couple of years as needed.

4.21 Robert Tankard: from way back, looking at Veterans needs, it has always been about having a place where you could start over; there's no 'after' to go to, both on the Vineyard and on the Cape; there is no guarantee that in a few years, a resident might be ready to leave.

4.22 Chair: do we have age group demographics? Bob T: most are over 40 years of age; then you get into the 55 – 65 group.

4.23 Peter G: with ref to pg 47 of the RFP on 147% - needs correction? also, having looked at the RFP criteria, it is on the right track. Chair: draft status will be updated.

4.24 Peter G: developers can do project-based Vouchers so that the burden of obtaining such assistance would not rest with the applicants; he also briefly mentions Veteran focused Vouchers. Chair: financial assistance for applicants will depend on the AMI % stipulated.

4.25 David Vigneault: individual voucher financing from the State goes with the income tiers and should reflect the need as pinpointed by the Veteran's folk here tonight; the RFP has a basis of specific need to work from, moving into construction funding subsidies; once we tie up actual needs with the RFP language, we've got it covered.

4.26 David: speaks briefly about vouchers, applications, and wait lists; if we add Voucher support to the selection criteria, the Developer must be able to set up Vouchers; the difference between 60% AMI and 80% AMI is vast when it comes to short term rentals; we will need to add need and income of the applicants and the various targeted levels. Peter B to David: Would you support such a project? David: sure; an example would be Morgan Woods, where we worked with Vouchers based on individual income, using the model of a specially created subsidy.

4.27 Some discussion of children and family in units at this point; consensus is that it's a lovely idea, but that the greatest need at present is for single individuals and this will stay as is; Chair noted that the RFP does not mention children and family; however, subsequent discussion also included the possible need for a resident with a caregiver, which led to the following:

**4.28 MOTION:** Proposed by Peter Bradford : that the RFP be revised to consist of 12 units with 2 units being 2 bedroom types, allowing for a resident and a caregiver/other Veteran, and under a specific Lease type of its own; Seconded simultaneously by Jim Bishop and Mark Crossland; approved of by all members present. Chair: will amend the RFP accordingly.

4.29 Peter B to Keith on Vouchers: How might such an aspect be handled? Keith: defers to David; David: it's run on the Cape by the Housing Assistance Corporation of Hyannis- they handle the Voucher program for the Cape and Islands. Jim Seymour/Peter G: the Barnstable Housing Association is an administrative agency that helps with the Voucher program. Peter B: so the program is available – it becomes a matter of giving the literature to the applicants; Peter G: it's a project based voucher offer.

4.30 David: the RFP has a specific 'need' base; in that, you differentiate between 'X' at X % and 'Y' at Y% and that in itself is a good subset type discussion to this. Further, we must also take into account the working differences between project based Vouchers and person based Vouchers.

4.31 Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion.

## **5. Noyes Rental Project**

Chair: Work should be complete and units ready for move in by this Apr 1<sup>st</sup>. What income levels are we looking for?

5.1 David: a one room can even accommodate a couple; and a studio design is often the best way to go; With 100% Ami at 75,200 to a person, we could take a dual approach of 80% AMI to a studio, and 100% AMI to a 1 bedroom. David will draft the application.

**5.2 MOTION:** Peter B proposed that studio unit AMI eligibility be increased from 80% to 100%, and that we should offer it to municipal employees of Oak Bluffs. Seconded by Mark Crossland. Agreed to by all members present.

David V added that by doing so we would make it available to a wider range of municipal employees – a good move.

## **6. Home Ownership**

Chair indicated that this would be carried over to the next meeting.

## **7. Funding Warrant**

7.1 Chair: to request project funding at the next Town Meeting. For eg, Jessica Lane - where we might want to go, what needs to be funded to clear it up, and what moves we can see beyond that. We can do this at the next meeting on Jan 17<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for submission for such requests is Jan 27<sup>th</sup>.

7.2 Peter B said it would require some 8K to determine ownership of the disputed piece at Jessica Lane; we have no idea how it may turn out, whether in our favor or against ; and it would take 5K to deal with both lots affected by the Leite issue. Both Jim and Mark Crossland expressed support for working along these lines to get clarity on what we might do with them.

## **8. Adjournment**

Was proposed at this point by Jim Bishop seconded by Peter Bradford with all members in favor. Chair Mark Leonard declared the meeting adjourned.

R G Eli, Secretary  
Affordable Housing Committee  
Town of Oak Bluffs.