

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Affordable Housing Committee, Town of Oak Bluffs, held on Jan 18th 2022 at 5.00pm

Present:

K. Mark Leonard, Chair
Jim Bishop, V/Chair
Peter Bradford
Mark Crossland
Katherine Donahue
Garri Saganenko

Attending:

Robert Tankard
Jim Seymour
Phil Cordello
Maura McGroarty

1.Call To Order

Chair Mark Leonard called the meeting to order at 5.02 pm.

2.Minutes of the last Meetings

- a. Minutes of the meeting of Nov 16th were approved, as proposed by Peter Bradford, seconded by Garri Saganenko and approved by those present;
- b. Minutes of the meeting of Dec 7th were approved, as proposed by Peter Bradford and seconded by Katherine Donahue, and approved by those present; and
- c. Minutes of the meeting of Jan 4th were approved, with Garri noting spelling errors to his name that the Secretary will correct, as proposed by the Chair and seconded by Garri Saganenko and with those present approving.

3.Updates from The Chair

Chair Mark Leonard noted that the Selectboard has approved changes to the language of the Warrant Article proposed by the Housing Bank for Oak Bluffs upcoming Town Meeting. Towns have been going back to approve changes to proposed Article wording on this and it looks like the Housing Bank will be on all 6 Town Meetings.

b.On the Noyes project, we are in the final stage of doing an update on a release for Bids, and the Chair and Jim are working on this; they hope to get it out by next week.

4. The Jessica Lane Discussion

4.1 right of way

Chair noted that Jessica Lane is part of the property of three homeowners on the north side of it; it's in their subdivision, and we need to discuss reaching out to them. in order for us to gain access to it; options available are getting them to agree; using eminent domain; or creating our own access on the other side of the property; easiest way would be via outreach to find out what would be agreeable to them.

Mark Crossland: expressed his support for beginning with an outreach approach.

Chair: we can try for an agreement on an easement.

Pete: said that he had checked on easements, and that the Town could accept a private way as a public way, which would include the maintenance of said road; perhaps we could suggest this.

Chair: would the Town then have to buy that property?

Pete: is it a road on a subdivision?

Chair: it's on a subdivision.

Pete: was of the opinion that we would not have to buy it from them, and gave the example of Lagoon Heights.

Chair: and the process for that?

Pete: it would have to go to Town Meeting.

Chair: any other comments on right of way? If none, let's go on.

4.2 Overall development

Chair: on the front, we have the Veterans supportive housing project; the rear of the Lot has some 2 – 2 ½ acres; **what are our options on the best use of this - for affordable or work force housing?**

Pete: is this something we need to do now or could it wait on future housing needs?

Chair: we could do that.

Pete: we're not asking the Veteran's project developer to work on this, so we could wait.; it might make sense to go with baby steps with the neighbors.

Mark Crossland: has anyone reached out to the neighbors?

Chair: we haven't yet and need to talk about it; at the last meeting Katie volunteered to assist with reaching out to the abutters; we need to talk it through and get a game plan together.

Garri: agreed with Pete about moving one step at a time; if we take it slow we might not alarm the abutters; Garri also expressed a view towards home ownership for the backlot project.

Katie: baby steps are good; but if we're going to the abutters about access needs, they need the big picture before they agree to anything; their concerns will be about what the intent is, and what comes next;

Chair: we can share what we have in mind ie a few houses in the back.

Pete: we can't really get into specifics until we've consulted with the Selectboard so that we know what they want; so we're not in a position to say much; we've got a 3 acre zoning area proposal here, with 2 houses in the front of the Lot set aside for the Veteran's.

Maura: can't be open ended when it's a right of way issue and people would want to know which direction we're heading; there's development around the corner coming at them as it is.

Pete: we need to establish the number of kerb cuts we are looking at - one for the Veterans project; one more for the back?

Chair: we will have no more than 4 houses at the back; the max size would be that of a 3 bedroom.

Pete: 2 houses and 1 accessory unit on each one would work.

Mark Crossland: whatever it is, we need to let the neighbors know what the limits are.

Maura: is there a Bylaw about the number of kerb cuts allowed and the linear footage that applies.

Mark Crossland: from the Main Road its 150 linear feet; on a secondary road like Jessica Lane we could check per the linear number of feet; think we would need one additional kerb cut - one for the Veterans and one for the back.

Chair: If we can use Jessica Lane then all we would need is a single kerb cut; we're looking to do no more

than 2 primary and possibly 2 accessory apartments, but also pending septic requirements that might apply.

Chair to Katie: is our discussion thus far clear enough to work with for outreach?

Katie: yes.

Chair: any other comments? hearing none, let's move on.

4.3 The Veteran's RFP

Chair: noted that the draft RFP had gone out to all members; more a matter of boilerplate guidance , pages 3 - 5, than a hard and fast statement; comments?

Pete: noted that the RFPO describes the facility as being alcohol free? A Veteran's requirement?

Chair: yes.

Garri: is this transitional housing for Veterans, post active duty?

Chair: yes, from service to civilian life; duration as needed; a supportive enterprise.

Pete: also for elderly Veterans who need housing & help?

Chair: as per demonstrated need.

Pete: it would include end of life situations then?

Chair: true; intent is to provide a temporary solution to demonstrated need.

Jim: idea is that the place is available for at least 2 years to a person; if they're elderly, they can use the transition period to apply to other affordable housing options like Island Elderly Housing;

Garri: so they will be substance free; and folk will take part in building cleaning etc? will there be a group or persons in charge of the property?

Jim: administration will be handled by the Cape & Islands Veterans Association.

Mark Crossland: and they would manage and be on island? Would they need housing?

Jim: the Cape group have their own people; I will double check come my next meeting with them.

Chair: they will run buildings and maintenance; and they will also have local volunteers, like Bob Tankard et al.

Mark Crossland: since they have their own folk here to help manage, they will decide the transition period then.

Chair: yes; they will evaluate and decide on who stays and who goes and when they go.

Pete: they will have an on site person then?

Jim: no; that's why we have MVCS support.

Pete: what about enforcement mechanisms?

Jim: will get info on that; will be up to the Cape & Island guys.

Pete: no on site person, no enforcement.

Jim: they will have max help available from Veterans Services, and from others like Tom Bennett and Bob Tankard; there is also a new Veterans Agent appointed to the Island.

Pete: and the management team is on MV?

Mark Crossland: with the number of volunteers on the island, won't be an issue.

Chair: agrees with Pete on the 'alcohol free' control issue vs a beer on a friday night; we'll get more clarity on it.

Garri: will there be accessible units on the first floor to serve disabled veteran's better?

Jim: we've discussed having 2 units...

Chair: there are different levels of accessibility, from being fully accessible to a wheelchair...

Jim: ramps; a 60 inch turnaround in the bathroom; a slide-in shower....

Pete: we could add to the RFP that two 1st floor units will be ADA compliant.

Chair & Jim noted agreement to Pete's suggestion.

Garri: will Veterans needing assistance, and tenants to the ADA units, need a caregiver?

Jim: the idea with having two 2 bedroom units is that we are allowing space for a live-in caregiver;

Jim brought up the issue of abutter's, subdivisions and our project's right of way; Pete referred him to the earlier part of the meeting (4.1) and summarized that briefly.

Pete moving on: common practice for a Town on private way to public way conversion is a possibility; but it is abutter property, so it is their right.

Mark Crossland: will follow up and talk with Richie Combra on this.

Jim: we're talking about the front half – a walkway to the bus stop should be okay;

Garri: we should work for Veterans input on this; hash out the accessibility issues; the grades of accessibility; the costs involved i.e for full ADA, and knowing what it entails.

Jim: the developer will need to understand this; it is needed, and it can be done; we will get a clearer idea when we get to bidding; IHT and IRS contractors for example, know the drill.

Chair: Section 521 is a full section on this – ADA requirements in the State of Massachusetts.

Jim: Yup. The State code is clear on specifics about ADA acceptable apartments.

Mark Crossland: Developers know the Codes on ADA issues

Chair: as with the Southern Tier project, accessibility and changing the grade of the land - the developer can use landscaping to resolve some of the issues even.

Maura: A question on financing – who owns this? The Town?

Chair: The RFP is similar to Southern Tier - we will lease the property; the developer will own the house.

Maura: and affiliation with MVCS? For administrative functions?

Jim: No office in the building, so no zoning change needed; maybe an open area with a computer and also for counseling; an area also for folks to sit and talk.

Maura: no setting up of administrative structure that duplicates what the Town has done and is already funded;

Jim: not with this case; Veterans Administration will cover most of it, if not all;

Chair: there will be no full time office space; just some space for counseling etc, more like a community room.

Pete: question: is the property taxable? i.e. as to the value of the affordable unit? As the Cape & Islands Veterans Group is a non-profit, is it tax exempt?

Chair: It would be, but a reduced rate may be possible based on the value of the property being deed restricted or based on the amount of rental income it's collecting.

Pete: And the Cape & Islands group will collect rent?

Chair: yes. If there are no further questions, we will move on.

4.4 Abutter Outreach

Chair: Katie has volunteered to help with this; we have discussed it; now we need to work out the outreach to both sides of the abutters in the entire area.

Jim: one of the guys from the Quantapog area is also a member of the Veterans Group construction committee, so we have a genuine neighborhood input source involved.

Pete: do we have a date for the RFP to go out?

Chair: once we've gotten the right of way issue handled effectively, we can go ahead with the RFP.

Mark Crossland: will talk to Richie about this.

Pete: any input from Town Counsel?

Chair: referred to his own earlier comments about the 3 alternatives available – these had come from Town Counsel M.Goldsmith. He also said the best thing to do was outreach with the abutters to see where they are on this.

Pete: neighbors may not be enthusiastic to know that their road is involved; a kerb cut is not so bad; but we may need another in the future?

Jim: we must keep the project cost tight in order to get it done right; all we need is a road for access to the back half.

Maura: how far in does the road need to go?

Pete: it opens up all the way, just as it is shown on paper.

Maura: and on the right side?

Pete: there's a cul-de-sac there.

Chair: asks if Katie has any comments?

Katie: will draft a letter and forward same to the Chair; Katie also feels it will be hard to get abutter approval; feels it will be easier to do the 1st step and then go from there.

Jim: perhaps we can take the approach that this project is good for the Town and for our Veterans;

Pete: at minimum, the kerb cut will help.

Mark Crossland: we needn't have a 2nd kerb cut; put the first one in – and it will cover about 100 feet in, so it's not intrusive; then the 2nd one will need to be between Quantapog and Jessica Lane – but there's just not enough room. I would take that approach first.

Pete: we should get the abutters in for the next meeting?

Jim: at least make contact – share the proposal with the largest number possible; an entrance at Jessica lane? If it goes okay then we move; if not, it becomes necessary to find a different way.

Pete: all we're proposing is a kerb cut.

Mark Crossland: do we need to know this before the 22nd? That's when we're putting this out?

Chair: No; we'll get the abutters' approval first.

Mark Crossland: will talk with Richie tomorrow; it's the 1st driveway on the right; the tar road is the Town's; the road going all the way through is private?

Chair: Jessica Lane is totally private;

Mark Crossland: Katie can tell them about the 100 feet in with the Town taking over the maintenance, and see how they will take it....

Jim: the Town or the developer can join the road association for 'x' number of years, pay the annual fee; no paved road;

Mark Crossland: and we can have the Veterans or their people maintain it?

Jim: have them join the association.

Pete: Katie's outreach is the first step....

Chair: Katie and the Chair will work on the abutter outreach letter; we can invite them to the next meeting for further discussion.

Pete: before the RFP, we certainly need a meeting with the abutters; we need to notify them by certified mail so no one says later they were blindsided by the process.

Jim: the Town Clerk can reach out to the abutters within 300 feet of the project site

Mark Crossland: to the immediate abutters first...

Chair: in the initial mailing we can provide Zoom meeting info

Pete: pick the date; state it will be by Zoom; print and send out by certified mail which will have a good response as vs normal mail.

Mark Crossland: we get a list of abutters within 300 feet for Katie and the Chair, to respond to

Pete: thanks to the Chair for all the work on this.

5. Member Updates

Pete: a Q – on the Town Meeting vote on the Housing Bank issue – and our position?

Chair: will get updated language, as approved by the Selectboard, so we all can review same; when we look at the big picture, as from our HPP perspective, there are opportunities for us.

Jim: it's still a Catch 22 situation when it comes to bonding.

Chair: agreed; but there is also the side of possible income to the Trust; with revised terms, it takes no more than 3 years to get out should we decide to; but it also affects tax rates, lowers the value of homes; and we must consider the Selectboard's position in determining ours.

Garri: a Q – on possible zoning changes? At State level, there are terms to adopt that cover not needing special permits?

Mark Crossland: we're still working on the language; some of the terms are difficult to enforce; so we're also looking at what other Towns like Aquinnah are doing;

Chair: yup. Building is almost easy by comparison when it comes to enforcement; how to get regulation carried out properly in accordance with permits.

Pete: West Tisbury has managed enforcement per their By Laws, and is self-reporting.

Chair: Housing Authority did this before, but it was hard to enforce.

Garri: on ADU's.

Pete: zoning for affordable housing?

Mark Crossland: not yet.

Pete: the frontage issue of 5000 feet?

Mark Crossland: again, the enforcement issue.

Pete: and the home ownership issue

Chair: as well as the wastewater issues also; small Lots, and the size of the houses depending. As with CWMP. Other comments?

6. No public comment

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair looked to a motion of adjournment; so proposed by Jim Bishop, seconded by Mark Crossland. Chair Mark Leonard then declared the meeting adjourned.

R G Eli
Secretary, AHC
Town of Oak Bluffs