



DANVERS AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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Minutes June 24, 2014

Attending: Gardner Trask, John Alden and Sally Calhoun

Joint meeting of the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust and the Planning Board to discuss a draft Housing Production Plan, presentation of the plan by Lynne Sweet of LDS Consulting Group.

Gardner Trask, Chairman of the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust (DAHT) addressed the Board. Trask told the Board that the Housing Production Plan had been developed. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has a process where the Town submits an application that reflects the present amount of affordable housing, and what is anticipated in the future. It acts as a blueprint. He stated that even when the Town reaches the ten percent threshold, they need to continue establishing affordable housing. Trask stated that some of the affordable housing is at the 80% level but other units are designated for 60% and 30% of the median income for the area. He told the Board that they were coming before them for their endorsement of the Housing Production Plan (HPP). Following endorsement of the HPP by the Planning Board the Trust would then go to the Selectmen in August for their endorsement. Lynne Sweet from LDS Consulting would describe the process for the Housing Production Plan.

Lynne Sweet thanked Gardner Trask and the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust who had been there throughout the process. She said that LDS had been engaged last summer, and in September and October they looked at the subsidized housing inventory and building permit data. They contacted existing housing developers, in particular Conifer Commons. They looked at infrastructure constraints that would lend or not lend itself to development. They met with the Trust in November and reviewed the results.

Sweet told the Board that the Trust was given samples of implementation plans that they had worked with in other communities to get ideas of what would go into a housing production plan. They did a public forum to hear from the community. Most people that attended were stakeholders and people who work in and around the area.

Once the housing production plan is submitted to the DHCD, they have to comment. She will then come back to the Trust with the comments from the DHCD, and then it will be certified. She explained that "certified" meant you were following the housing production plan and units were being produced in locations mentioned in that plan. Sweet told the Board that the Town would have a bigger say in projects by getting local control back. She said that Danvers was just about at the ten percent threshold, but explained that there is a lag time as to when the state

agrees that units are produced. Sweet said that once the Town has a housing production plan, Danvers will be back in the driver's seat when they are over the ten percent threshold. Sweet went over the powerpoint presentation of the Housing Production Plan.

Cheetham felt some of the data was misleading concerning affordable units. At Conifer Hill, all the units are affordable.

Sweet said that they would go over the conclusions first. She said that the Town had a variety of programs, and it made it difficult for them to think of new ideas. Stakeholders felt that not enough was being done for building for lower income, and this was evident with the number of applications that qualified when Conifer did its lottery.

Sweet explained that stakeholders included real estate brokers, social service providers and housing providers. Some are civic leaders in the community, business leaders and faith-based organizations. She said there was a list of the organizations that they connected with. They wanted to touch different sides of the housing. There is still a large population housed in hotels.

Danvers has a commercial base and has not had to deal with an override. Danvers has a sense of pride and ownership. It has a great school system. The Boards are staffed.

Sweet felt that one of the needs that stood out was the need for young professionals to find housing. It is hard to know why the young people are not moving into the Town. She felt there was a need to have an area with starter homes. There is always needs for senior housing. With regard to special needs, people with special needs are living longer, and they need accessible housing. Group homes are in the past. People want to be mainstreamed and live within the community.

Cheetham asked what was the biggest demand and who would it be built for. Sweet felt there was not a need for one specific thing. She felt it was harder for a family if you have a single mom and kids trying to find a job and as well as a place to live.

Sweet said that subsidized units for families are the first in need. Seniors are on fixed incomes. They have houses that have depreciated, and they have harder choices in front of them. Can they live in an acceptable home, and can they get transportation.

Trask said that the Trust is geared for families with two and three-bedroom units.

Sweet said that guidelines have come out that want three-bedroom units.

Farmer said that the population is falling.

Sweet responded that it was falling all over the country. Information Technology (IT) is growing in Boston. She wondered if these people chose to live elsewhere, and this might be why they are leaving Danvers. She felt it was somewhere in the middle.

Farmer said that the state is losing the battle of keeping the 25-35 year olds.

Sweet pointed out that other places have jobs and better housing prices.

Henry felt that the Town needed to grow. We know we are losing the battle, but we do not want to build.

Trask pointed out that people can now work remotely. We have community businesses, but they do not engage that population age. Boston is a medical town, and engineering jobs are in other parts of the country.

Sweet said that until we greatly accelerate housing starts, housing costs will remain high. There are about 10,000 units in the pipeline. They will not get the rents that they are looking for.

Danvers is a built-out community. The wastewater treatment plant is near capacity.

Sweet said that transportation is congested around rush hours. Danvers is car dependent and does not have enough transportation.

Sweet said that the Housing Production Goals started in 2014 with the assumption that all units ended up in the inventory. They looked at historical growth data. The next census will be in 2016. She pointed out that if units still grow and you produce 10 units a year, you may fall below the ten percent threshold. She said that she was instructed by the Trust that 10 units per year was an achievable goal. The state wants you to tell them what you are going to add per year.

Trask said this was a goal.

Sweet said that the Housing Production Plan would be good for five years.

Susan Haber addressed the Board. She did an analysis of zoning regulations. She reviewed bylaws with an eye to those that foster and hinder affordable housing and had some suggestions. Some provisions create affordable housing but don't put the units on the SHI. That is a policy issue, and she was referring to the EFLA. There is a restriction on the blood relatives who can live in the EFLA. Currently they are a by-right use in certain circumstances, and they are allowed to be a maximum of 750 square feet. The ZBA can issue a Special Permit for a detached building. The ZBA has issued a variance for two EFLAS that are 1,000 square feet. She felt that they may want to up the size of the EFLA. The other issue is the annual cap of 25 EFLAS. There were a few that came in that were grandfathered. They are not meeting that cap right now. She questioned enforcement and whether the units were getting on the books.

Cheetham asked if the EFLAS count since it is providing housing. Trask asked whether they should change the zoning to have a deed restriction to make the property affordable.

Trask said that the Trust has discussed helping a senior get the unit deed restricted.

Sweet said that 99 units were grandfathered. They did spend some time talking about the EFLA, but it is very hard to deed restrict them.

Haber pointed out that the distinction needs to be made between a deed restriction vs. an affordable unit. People are reluctant to go through the process.

Henry said HOME money can be spent on seniors, but the unit will not go on the SHI. When we are above the ten percent threshold, there will be more of a tolerance to do those units.

Haber pointed out the Inclusionary Provision to the bylaw that is triggered with a set unit threshold. It is mandatory. A Special Permit produces a unit or a fee to the Town. In the bylaw there are maximum income limits for homeowners and rentals.

Haber pointed out the project at 58 Riverview gave one affordable off-site unit. Trask stated that this has become two three-bedroom units to be constructed as a result of this project.

Haber said that the ARIA project at Hathorne Hill gave a one-time fee of \$92,000. She asked whether Inclusionary Zoning could be expanded beyond multi-family. She asked if it could be linked to land division, a conventional subdivision plan or an ANR plan. Haber said that the Town of Duxbury linked their land division to their inclusionary zoning.

Haber said that residents are more comfortable with the ZBA issuing decisions instead of putting it in zoning. Her concern is that if the attitude of the Town changes that could be a problem.

Haber said that they looked to determine whether the commercial district was a help or hindrance to affordable housing. She felt it was an impediment. She suggested that they may want to parallel the Waterfront Village District which allowed mixed-use development. It would be great for the vibrancy of downtown. There is precedence for overlay districts.

Haber said that there is the notion of incentive zoning which is not in the Danvers bylaws. It is voluntary. This is the carrot vs. the stick approach. It allows the developer to develop in a way that may be allowed in zoning if they develop affordable housing. She stated that the City of Cambridge provides a density bonus if they provide an affordable unit.

Haber also brought up the 40R Process – Smart Growth Process. A lot of towns have made use of it. It is typically an overlay zone. Some of the feedback they have received is that certain town officials do not like overlay.

Sears said that a presentation was made about smart zoning, and it was decided that they did not want a commuter rail. There is a limited amount of busing. The Town is almost at the ten percent threshold, and there is not much raw land to develop. They see a lot of re-use. They do have million dollar developments. Sears said the Town would not want developments of 20 units per acre. New units being developed will probably be by reuse.

Sweet said she appreciated the feedback of the Board. She said that they put into the plan what we thought could be achieved.

Task said that they did not want to limit themselves because of the present political climate.

Prentiss brought up the example of the City of Cambridge increasing density and asked if there was any place in the suburbs that had tried this.

Henry said in Lexington they have a cluster subdivision bylaw where 50% of units are size restricted. If a developer wants a density bonus, they get a 20% bump in the GSA in exchange for 10% of the units counting. They have had 2 developments since 2008.

Sweet pointed out that the State wants locations listed in the housing production plan.

Trask said that the Trust started with seed money. They entertain proposals from community partners, and they have helped subsidized at \$25,000 per subsidy. He explained that they spent more on 55 Coolidge since they purchased the property for the back taxes and legal fees owed. Habitat for Humanity then purchased the property from the Trust. They are in the process of converting an old abandoned home back into the community. Trask felt that developers are open to the social need. Trask said that they have seen a lot of success and are getting home ownership opportunities. He explained that the Trust wants to work with the Planning Board to tighten up the loopholes. The Trust does not want to become landlords. They are volunteers and do not want to manage properties. They are a facilitator.

Sally Calhoun, a member of the Trust, said that she does not focus on the SHI piece. She felt that that has had an impact on development. She hates to be locked into a formula. There is a need for housing. This whole process is a learning curve.

Cheetham did not agree with one of the bullets on the slide under implementation strategies which mentioned that all eligible affordable units are added to the SHI. She would rather have it read that all eligible units on the SHI stay on the SHI as well as another bullet that you monitor and count affordable housing that exists in Town that does not qualify for SHI. She would like to track mobile homes and EFLAS whether or not they are counted. Sweet pointed out where this was in the plan. She asked what the goal would be of monitoring units that are not going on the SHI.

Cheetham said that we have people living in the Town in affordable units that are not necessarily on the SHI.

Trask felt this should be a charge for the DAHT. They are apartments under the 80% level like the mobile homes, but you cannot deed restrict mobile homes. If we counted all the things that were affordable under the DHCD standards we are over 10%.

Sweet said that Fletcher is keeping track of the EFLAS as well as what is going on in the motels. She oversees a mortgage program. Her job is keeping track of things that are not on the SHI. Sweet asked the Board if they wanted to add it to the plan or do it informally.

Trask felt it would not be a bad idea to keep an inventory of non-SHI units. He understands it does not matter to the DHCD.

Haber felt everyone was looking for a complete picture.

Cheetham said that she had a hard time looking at this document when everything was not set forth that was going on in town. She also had a hard time looking at one paragraph addressing the people in the motels.

Sweet said that the motels are a huge issue for the Town. She said that they had a lot more in the plan, and at the time of the presentation they were advised not to address it. They were told to only address it in passing because the reality is that the Trust has no control of what is going on. It is a State decision. The housing plan identifies the motels and EFLAS. There is a lot of this information in the plan that is known.

Trask felt this bullet should go under the Education and Capacity Building Strategies.

Trask, he sees it under the education bullet. There is a difference between how many affordable units do you have in Town vs. how many affordable units do you count in Town. He felt a bullet should be added that said that the Trust keep an inventory of units that are considered affordable by the DHCD standards of affordability. This would provide a complete picture.

Sweet said that the needs assessment document identified everything they were informed about.

Henry asked whether the Trust should report back annually to the Selectmen or Planning Board.

Trask felt the Trust should report back to the Planning Board, ZBA and Selectmen.

Sweet said that if everyone was comfortable that this was the spot for the new bullet, she and Gardner could tweak the language.

Henry said that tracking new growth is important. The building department should be able to tell us how much the Town has grown.

Sweet said that yearly tracking of units will be added to the plan.

Trask asked the Board if anything surprised them or are not comfortable with.

Farmer felt the statistics set forth in the plan were terrific.

Cheetham commented on the population trends and where the growth was happening within the Town. She felt some was hard to understand. Sweet asked if she meant the census track, which Cheetham confirmed. Cheetham is concerned with the school system being pressured with new developments.

Farmer felt the low interest rate environment would be changing in the near future. Sweet said the data would constantly be in flux. Sweet felt that they do not recommend home ownership for households earning under 70% because it does not leave the owners any money to deal with any problem that may arise with the home.

Trask said that a lot of this is predicated on guesswork. We are projecting the growth. The Hunt Hospital was going to be developed into a medical community surrounded by homes for seniors, but this fell through. But something else may come along. Trask said that the Town has learned from the census. He said that the Selectmen are trying to solve the issue of the hotel/motel families and felt if the Town has the economic burden of these families they should get some consideration from the DHCD.

Calhoun addressed the Board and asked if the Planning Board was comfortable with the housing production plan, would they approve it so that the Trust can move on to the next step and present to the State for approval with the one amendment that was requested.

Sears said that they could provide data where available parcels are located in Town.

Day said that they could include some upcoming parcels they know are going to be developed to be contemporary when the housing production plan is released. They know they have the Whipple Hill development, which will be a twenty unit subdivision. She said that the Hunt Hospital property had just been sold, so something will happen with that property.

Sweet asked if she could be provided with specific addresses to insert into the plan, and Day said she would provide the information to the Trust.

Henry thanked Gardner Trask and Susan Fletcher for having a meeting with him. He was concerned with the process, and some of his concerns have been relieved. He is skeptical that they will get 10 units per year, but it is good to have the goal.

Day said she used some of the data out of the plan last week.

MOTION: Prentiss moved to endorse the Housing Production Plan set forth by the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust with amendments. Zilinsky seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Prentiss moved to adjourn. Henry seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Tish Lentine
Clerk