

Town of Weston
Minutes for the Elderly Housing Committee
Tuesday, April 13, 2021
Brook School Apartments
Weston, MA 02493
Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

EHC Members: Tom Timko – Chair, Melissa Brokalakis, Tack Chace, John Hennessey, and Carol Ott

Town of Weston: Monyette Vickers – BSA Manager

Tenants/Public: Paul and Rachel Bau, Patti Davenport, Paul Foley, Betsy Gescheider, Judith Harding, Frank Hillary, Phil and Ginny Lombardo, Gary Marcoux, Alan Orth, Shirley Small-Rougeau, Lanna Yuen, Vee Brooks

Call to Order 7:48 a.m.

“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Weston will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. We will strive to provide access to such meetings via a link to call in, or other similar option. In the event we are unable to accommodate the same, despite best efforts, we will post recorded sessions of the meeting as soon as possible following the same. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings.”

Minutes: Minutes from the February and March meetings were approved on a roll call vote.

Brook School Apartments Update – Monyette

BSA Campus update: The catch basin near Building A and Building D will be repaired. The carpeting will be replaced for part of Building C. Both are in the capital budget.

Vacancies: There is one market unit available. All three subsidized units have been filled. One unit is coming available but will need a full upgrade - new kitchen, floor, and cabinets.

Housing Certification Specialist: The Housing Certification Specialist is a 15-hour-a-week job. It would be a good starting point for someone interested in property management. Someone can start and then they could be trained with the specifics required. So far there’s been only one applicant and it was not a good fit. Monyette is still looking. Monyette will re-post a job as well as trying additional places to post, like with the housing agency. Barkan mentioned that they too are having problems hiring people. Part of the problem is Covid. People are not looking for a job to interact with other people and also parents are having to stay home with the kids who are out of school.

Monyette is discussing a contract with Barkan to do the work until the position is filled.

There was a long discussion about this. We discussed the Barkan proposal to provide the service to recertify the residents of the subsidized units. The contract would require us to use Barkan's database and software, with their monthly software fee, while we're using our system and our software, for which we are already paying a fee. Further Barkan is offering phone or internet contact with online forms. We want in-person contact. Tom asked Monyette whether the Barkan contact would be worth it, what it costs versus what we get? Monyette said, "No, it would not be."

Monyette will look at getting help from a temp agency.

Melissa emphasized that we need to get help for Monyette. She is swamped. The rest of the Board agreed.

Carol Ott asked if there was a way for Monyette to restructure the job and let Monyette do the recertifications and have someone else do part of her normal job. Monyette will look into this but nothing immediately comes to mind. Monyette empathized again we are willing to train the individual for the specifics of the job.

Monyette is talking to Lisa Yanakakis and Susan Kelley about getting the check-scan technology that would make her life easier in depositing the rent checks.

Covid-19 Safety Protocols: Everyone is still social distancing. Monyette conferred with Wendy at the Board of Health. The Palmer Room is still open with a limit of six people. Other indoor common areas are not open yet. Residents have been socializing outside. Monyette is planning on putting the grills out. Maybe there will be a July 4th cookout ,possibly with outside entertainment again.

Vaccines: The clinic for the 2nd dose is expected to be some time this week. After that, about 90 % of BSA residents will be fully vaccinated. The other 10% need to contact the Board of Health or, more likely, go on line to the Commonwealth's website to schedule their Covid vaccine shots.

LIP Application - Monyette

DHCD (Department of Housing and Community Development) responded to our LIP (Local Initiative Program) application to get the units in Building D counted in Weston's SHI (Subsidized Housing Inventory). They will only count the six units for which we do not have a local preference. If we want to others counted, we have to remove the local preference. To get the six counted, we would have to have a separate affirmative action plan and a separate application process. The questions was raised as to whether this was worth the effort and cost to add only six units to the Weston's SHI. When we started we had assumed that after the six were filled through the separate process that DHCD, consistent with what they had done in the past, would count all 24 units. Now we know DHCD will not do that as long as we have any Weston preference, do we want to continue? John said, "No." Tom suggested we will find out more from Liz and talk about it at our next meeting. Melissa said we had done our part. Tack asked if the Town Meeting and the CPC votes required us get the units on the SHI? Tom asked Tack to look into that.

8:20 Common Area Space Study Update— Tom

On Wednesday the PBC (Permanent Building Committee) gave its approval for the Town of Weston Facilities Department to negotiate with CBI to put together a contract for the BSA common space and storage areas work. CBI is one of the approved contractors we have worked with in the past. We want the design and construction documents ready for the Fall Town Meeting. We need to complete the design process before we can ask for the money. This contract is to complete the design and construction documents and identify a contractor. Ideally construction could start in November or December.

Paul Foley asked about the size of the proposed storage units. Tom replied that they will be approximately the same size as a present unit and will be private and enclosed. Tom reminded us that the work covered in this contract will also adjust some of the common space areas that we talked about in the past. Monyette pointed out the residents would have to move their stored items out of their storage unit for this work to be completed. John suggested that we should get a modular container for people to store their materials from their storage units during construction. Tom agreed. Monyette reminded us that the Weston Historic Society will have to move their stored items. The commission is planning to move to the Jones Tavern when it is completed, but that is moving very slowly. (The Women's Community League of Weston also has some material stored at BSA.)

8:30 Building E - EHC

Liz Valenta is working on the financial models we need to proceed. There is a question of whether we should go to the Town Meeting to bond the building or go to the CPA.

We discussed Sunrise and Wingate. Sunrise is for sale and Wingate apparently is in some sort of transition as one of the two contiguous facilities has closed. The Board put forth multiple ideas about expanding and adjusting either site for elderly housing or affordable housing for Weston. Could the Sunrise and Wingate facilities give us twice the space of Building E and at half cost? Those buildings were in good shape. Melissa asked if there was some way to use those facilities to meet our needs in an innovative fashion, maybe a combination of independent living and assisted living. Others suggestions included co-housing, a mix of public and private units, or a combination of public and private ownership. Tom will reach out to Harvey Boshart, from the Select Board, and Sarah Rhatigan, from the Affordable Housing Trust, to explore ideas and options. John will speak to the former COO of Wingate to see if he can get a better picture of what is happening there.

8:45 Affordable Housing Trust Update- Tom

Zero Wellesley Street- is creeping along with Habitat for Humanity. The guess is that there is a high probability that construction won't start until after 2022.

518 South Ave - The Commonwealth's Housing Appeals Court (HAC) rejected Weston's denial of the South Ave permit. Weston claimed Safe Harbor from new 40B developments because of the percent of land used by affordable housing. The developer sued objecting to the calculation. The Commonwealth agreed with the developer. Further, the Commonwealth reprimanded Weston and told Weston to do a full review and go back to the Zoning Board of Appeals. <https://www.westonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/28793/HAC-Safe-Harbor-Denial--March-15-2021-PDF> (More simply, go to www.westonma.gov and then type 518 into the search bar. Click on the April 7, 2021 link to the HAC decision.)

751 Boston Post Road - some abutters are suing. The net result appears to be that the development has been stopped and is in court. The comment was made that thanks to predictable NIMBY behavior, once again Weston is wide open to 40Bs. At present, meeting the need for significantly more affordable housing in Weston appears to be a mess. Melissa pointed out this is a more compelling reason for us to look into any option provided by Sunrise or Wingate.

Public Comments

In response to Paul Bau's question, it was confirmed that unvaccinated BSA residents could try calling the Weston Board of Health but would probably end up going to the Commonwealth's Covid website for an appointment to get vaccine shots.

In response to Alan Orth's question, Monyette replied that she is looking into putting some kind of floor, like pavers, into the seating area where residents gather outside near the parking lot and the smoking area by Bldg. D. She does not want to give up any parking space and has to be sure it would be safe.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 4th, 2021

Meeting Adjourned: 8:52 a.m.