

Boxborough Housing Board
Minutes of Wednesday, June 8, 2023, meeting
In-person, Town Hall Boxborough MA 01719

Housing Board Members Present: Al Murphy, Chair; Channing Wagg, Vice Chair;
Jessie Robinson, Korrine Stephens, Ron Vogel

Invited Attendees present: Becky Neville, Wendy Trinks

Guests: Hugh Fortmiller

A quorum being present, Chair Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

I. Informational Items

Chair Murphy commented on the following topics, as listed on the agenda plus two others:

- A. DHCD name change to Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)
- B. The Assabet Regional Housing Consortium (ARHC) is holding a Zoom seminar on Tuesday June 20 entitled *Advocacy for Municipalities: Creating Support for Affordable Housing*.
- C. Up-date on the Boxborough Emergency Assistance Program (BEAP). To date, approximately \$30,000 has been disbursed to cover eligible needs with a timeline of \$50,000 by calendar year-end 2023 and the entire amount by calendar year-end 2024.
- D. A *Boston Globe* article in which Boxborough was mentioned as to Community Preservation Act fund use. This was covered in more detail in section III. A.
- E. Fire Chief Fillebrown's retirement party on June 20.

II. Minutes

- A. Minutes of the May 3, 2023, meeting were reviewed, moved to accept, and so done by unanimous vote.

III. Old Business

- A. Chair Murphy commented upon two hand-outs comprising arrayed U. S. 2020 Census data pertaining to Boxborough and there ensued a discussion of same. Although the thrust of the comments led to the conclusion that low-income renters were the cohort most in need of low-cost housing support, the deliberation touched on the following elements prompted by the data.
 1. Mortgage assistance,
 2. ARCAP Solutions homeowners' program,
 3. Value of ownership equity,

- a) Value of easing financial burden on renters,
- 4. Sustainability, including low-cost construction, “stretch code” considerations and “specialized” developers.

Further discussion encompassed information that approximately two-thirds of the appeals directed to the community services coordinator were for financial assistance related to housing costs. It was then suggested that one possible avenue for the housing board to pursue was expansion of the Boxborough Rental Assistance Program (BRAP).

Other comments included the apparent plans to build 1000 affordable housing units in Littleton and the impact that would have on Boxborough and the surrounding communities, the possibility of building non-deed restricted affordable housing at 72 Stow Road.

Chair Murphy then commented on the above referenced *Globe* article and that funds were available for affordable housing related projects available but not yet brought forward for consideration by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

- B. The discussion then segued to the proposed HOPE program. It was pointed out that among the possible Boxborough Meadows affordable housing preservation projects a heat-pump sustainability pilot project might be a suitable funding request of the CPC’s next cycle. Member Stephens agreed to contact the Sustainability Committee to discuss the matter and to devote further consideration to CPC applications in support of the overall HOPE program.
- C. Ms. Trinks then commented on the BRAP. The program currently has 14 participating households with another expected to be covered in August. Ensuing comments included that \$250/month might now be out-of-date considering inflation. It was also noted that some participating households left the program early having gained more solid financial footing but that most stayed for the allowed three years although only in rate cases petitioned for an extension when the time period ran out.

IV. New Business

A. Housing Production Plan

Chair Murphy offered some thoughts and opinions on the Housing Production Plan to the effect that it might not be necessary to prepare an updated version since it appeared that the town ran no risk of having its Subsidized Housing Inventory fall below the 10% of total housing units.

A contrary opinion was offered to the effect that having an up-dated plan on file with DHCD/EOHLC indicates due diligence on the housing board's part.

A discussion ensued on the merits of outsourcing the preparation of such a plan. It was decided that a copy of the current version would be provided the members for review and thoughts on the matter.

V. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded for adjournment and the meeting closed at 9:19 p.m.

VI. List of Documents/Exhibits Used

1. Graphic of affordable home price
2. Draft Minutes 6_8_23
3. Cost of Green Building BG 20230705
4. Copy of BEAP Handout July 11th
5. Quote for-maintenance of water system

Respectfully submitted by meeting secretary, vice-chair Channing Wagg