

Boxborough Housing Board
Minutes of Wednesday, July 13, 2023, meeting
In-person, Town Hall Boxborough MA 01719

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

Invited Attendees present: Becky Neville, Wendy Trink

Guests: Mark Brooks, Partner/Founder Omni Properties, LLC; Hugh Fortmiller; Francie Nolde

A quorum being present, Chair Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

I. Minutes

The minutes of the June 8, 2023, meeting were reviewed, an error of fact identified, and Chair Murphy authorized to correct. A motion to accept the minutes under these conditions was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

II. Old Business

A. Mark Brooks commented on various aspects of the potential development of low-cost affordable housing on the property at 72 Stow Road. Included in his remarks were the following topics:

- i. The prevalence of PFAS contamination in the town's water supply and the need to account for this in any development proposals,
- ii. The requirement for a habitat review of land to be developed. (This may have been done in one or another engineering studies of the referenced property commissioned by the Boxborough Building Committee.) The required review falls under the remit of the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Protection,
- iii. Potential "legal mandates" regarding water quality and sewage,
- iv. There was a brief discussion of the MBTA multi-family zoning requirements,
- v. The question of public funding of affordable housing was raised and Mr. Brooks opined that such for small developments, i.e., such as contemplated by Boxborough, would be difficult to obtain. He noted that tax credits are available from the Commonwealth for affordable housing,
- vi. Mr. Brooks suggested two avenues for the housing board to explore. One of these was Ms. Kristen Hilberg who had developed a small-scale condominium complex in town. (Ms. Hilberg is currently a member of the Boxborough Select Board.) Another would be to contact the Acton Housing Authority to determine what cooperative action might be feasible,
- vii. A general discussion of sustainable elements in new construction brought out the opinion that all sustainable energy projects in today's circumstances require subsidies due to the economics involved.

In summary, Mr. Brooks identified several issues to consider in regard to the proposed project for low-cost, affordable housing at 72 Stow Road. These centered on water quality/availability, natural habitat, number/size of units, sustainability aspects and the economics involved. These centered on water quality/availability, natural habitat, number/size of units, sustainability aspects and the economics involved, including an estimate of \$105/sf. Mr. Brooks quoted several amounts in his remarks, but not all of them were captured in the minutes. He was,

however, speaking extemporaneously, so it is difficult to assess the appropriate weight to assign his figures other than he thought the proposition to be “expensive.” He graciously offered to speak with the board again upon request.

Potential Action item for the board: See vi., above.

- B. Wendy Trinks reported on:
 - i. the Boxborough Rental Assistance Program and recommended that the application date be changed to a “Open All Year” basis. The board concurred and did not feel a vote was required,
 - ii. the Boxborough Emergency Assistance Program, funded via ARPA, and referred to a spreadsheet hand-out indicating the nature of the requests for such assistance since the first of the calendar year. The board complimented Wendy on this very helpful record keeping.
- C. The board discussed the proposed Homeowner Opportunity for Preservation and Enhancement (H.O.P.E.) program. It was decided to change ‘Enhancement’ to Equity. There then ensued a discussion of funding for necessary preservation activities. Again, the difficulty of identifying sources of public funds was commented upon.

Action item:

Ms. Stephens, Trinks and Chair Murphy will meet with Town Administrator Michael Johns to explore possible avenues of town financial support for this important program.

III. New Business

- A. Pilot Heat Pump Program
Adding to comments from Francie Nolde regarding possible HUD funding for heat pumps, Chair Murphy advised that he had contacted the office of state senator, Jamie Eldridge regarding the proposed pilot program of installing same in the Boxborough Meadows affordable units. He reported that he had not as yet received a reply to his e-mailed letter.
- B. Chair Murphy commented on the necessity of following Open Meeting Law rules on documentation pertinent to housing board meetings, i.e., minutes, hand-outs, etc. Ms. Trinks reported that the town clerk, Rebecca Harris, advised her that non-material changes may be made to an agenda between the time it is posted and the referenced scheduled meeting to which it pertains.

IV. Adjournment

A motion was made, seconded, and approved for adjournment, and the meeting closed at 9:29 p.m.

V. List of Documents/Exhibits Used

- A. Stow Road handout
- B. BRAP application form
- C. Draft Minutes 6_8_23
- D. Copy of BEAP Handout July 11th

Respectfully submitted by meeting secretary, vice-chair Channing Wagg