

Affordable Housing Board Meeting
Thursday, July 19, 2012

The following are the minutes of the Affordable Housing Board meeting, which was held on Thursday, July 19, 2012 in the Community Development Conference Room, located in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building.

I. Statement of Proper Notice

Adequate notice of the regular meeting of the Lawrence Township Affordable Housing Board has been provided by filing an annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk, and by filing the agenda with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building, and mailing to the Trenton Times, the Trentonian and the Lawrence Ledger.

Present: Peter Ferrone, John Masso, Susan McCloskey, Kevin VanHise, Jean Washington, Walker Ristau

Absent: William Capell

Excused Absence: None

Also Present: James Kownacki, Council Liaison, Andrew Link, Liaison;
Susan Snook, Secretary

II. Approval of Minutes:

The June 21, 2012 minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

III. Public Comment:

None

IV. Allocation of Trust Funds:

Chairperson Van Hise stated the Township created a grant program and received State approval and has all the programs in place and all the monies are available for these grants. The reason for the creation of these programs was to commit the funds for affordable housing purposes and prevent the potential seizure of the funds by the State. Fair Share Housing Center, one of the advocacy groups, instituted an action in the Appellate Division requesting that the Court prohibit COAH from seizing the funds statewide. According to the June financial reports, the State wide amount was approximately \$161 million dollars.

The main argument advanced is when Roberts Bill was adopted in 2008, it required COAH to adopt regulations for the commitment of affordable housing but although rules were never adopted, the State now wants to seize this money. The ultimate decision by the Court will be decided later; however, on Friday evening, the Court issued an order denying the motion for an injunction, but advising that the Court will entertain briefing on the entire issue and specifically providing the State will need to provide process for municipalities before seizing any funds. As such, before COAH can claim the money, they must write a letter to the Municipality stating what amount is at risk giving the municipality a chance to respond and providing for a hearing. The Townships have a right to contest it before any the money is taken.

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While the trust fund issues are pending, the Supreme Court has also accepted certification on the case regarding the Governor's attempt to dismantle COAH and consolidate it with DCA, but no argument has been set yet. We are also still waiting for argument to be scheduled by the Court in the various challenges to COAH's third round rules. Mr. Link stated we do have one contract in the amount of \$350,000 for housing rehabilitation and contracted with Affordable Housing Administrators, Maureen Fullaway is the principal, to manage the rehab. program; with a signed contract.

V. Status of Changes at State Level:

Discussed as part of the Allocation of Trust funds

VI. Cancellation of August Meeting

A motion was made by Jean Washington to cancel the August meeting and seconded by Sue McCloskey. The vote was unanimous to cancel the meeting.

VII. Other Business:

A question was asked if there is an affordable housing activity. Mr. Link stated the units go up for sale and they sell quickly anywhere from the initial listing and inspection, about 1 to 4 months to get them unit sold. Some of the homeowners had to reduce the prices, where a lot of them had to reduce the prices and this is something new, it was where we set the maximum price based on the State increases and people were also able to get those maximum prices, which were never an issue. Now, people are realizing they must be flexible in their prices and the ones who are not flexible are not selling their units as quickly.

Mr. Link stated the 3 bedroom units in rental are the most precious. The one bedroom moderate units are the most difficult to rent, which are close in rent to the regular market rate. The apartment complexes have the one-bedroom units in their inventory a lot longer.

Mr. Ferrone asked how many rental units are in the Affordable Housing program. Mr. Link stated there are 131 rentals and 369 for sale units. These are the ones we take applications for; however, there are more units in the program that we do not take applications for such as Brookshire (counted in our program, but they do the application process), same as Lawrence Plaza and Heritage Village (we do not get credit for these units because of the RCA (Regional Contribution Agreement) because we received the approval to build them) where the credits go to Manalapan Township.

II. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59. The next meeting will be held on September 20, 2012 p.m.


Susan Snook
Secretary

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