

Affordable Housing Board Meeting
Thursday, September 19, 2013

The following are the minutes of the Affordable Housing Board meeting, which was held on Thursday, September 19, 2013 in the Community Development Conference Room, located in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building.

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.

Opening of Meeting/Roll Call (6:30 p.m.):

Present: Susan McCloskey; Kevin VanHise; Jean Washington; Walker Ristau

Absent: None

Excused Absence: William Capell; Peter Ferrone; John Masso, James Kownacki, Council Liaison

Also Present: J. Andrew Link, Principal Planner; Susan Snook, Secretary

II. Approval of Minutes:

The July 18, 2013 minutes were approved as submitted by unanimous vote.

III. General Public Comment:

None

IV. Hardship Waiver Request:

Lynn Kush for Thomas Miller, 184 Federal Point Boulevard:

Ms. Kush introduced herself and her realtor, Janice Mironov-Anastasia of Prudential Fox & Roach. Ms. Kush explained that her deceased father purchased the unit brand new and is a low income unit because of his income which was social security only. Ms. Kush and her husband have been paying the mortgage and the bills since January and currently they are 2 ½ months behind on the mortgage as well as the maintenance fee because of financial reasons.

Ms. Kush explained that there are two people interested in making an offer; however, their income is too high. She also went through the entire list and no one was interested. Ms. Kush continued to state she has exhausted the funds to keep it going; however, she does not want her father's good name sullied with a foreclosure.

Ms. Kush stated they are doing what they can to keep the building afloat and Roma Bank wants the mortgage paid every month. Ms. Kush stated the mortgage is \$348.76; maintenance fees are \$153 a month and the homeowners insurance is \$36.00 a month. As of Friday, the bank put it into foreclosure. They currently owe \$46,000.00 on the unit and have put \$18,000.00 in to it. The audience is limited either by salary is too high or they do not meet the age restriction. It is currently on the market for \$78,099, which is the maximum amount.

Ms. Kush stated if the bank forecloses how it will impact the neighbors. Ms. Mironov-Anastasia stated the unit has been marketed which is on the MLS, Zillow, etc. and is exposed to a million people. Ms. Kush stated that she spoke with the collections department of the bank and it is in arrears and asked if a payment could be made in the amount of \$1,100.00; she said she sent a check in the amount of \$350.00 on the 14th and she had to go get her grandchildren; she put stop payment on the check and the bank stated the unit will go into foreclosure.

Chairperson VanHise stated will the bank work with you; however, the bank stated they will not stop but to continue to market it until the mortgage will be paid; however, there will be legal fees of \$200 a house that will have to be paid. The homeowners association stopped sending bills and will satisfy the lien when the property is sold.

Chairperson VanHise stated what happens if it goes to foreclosure and this unit has one of the older affordable housing restrictions and could go into foreclosure and we will lose it and the Board should grant the waiver.

Mr. Link stated there is one new name on the low list and Ms. Mironov-Anastasia wanted to get the name. She stated the letter is a template from the Township and she not only sends out the letter she also calls them. Ms. Mironov-Anastasia stated there are 13 people on the original list and then two (2) additional names were given to her.

Ms. McCloskey suggested bringing it up at the Senior Citizen Center about units that are for sale for age restricted units.

Ms. McCloskey made the motion to grant the waiver and seconded by Mr. Ristau; therefore, the Board granted the hardship waiver by unanimous vote.

Chairperson VanHise stated a letter will go for your records and you can sell to a moderate income qualified person. However, the buyer must be informed that if they decide to sell it; it must remain as a low income unit.

V. Hardship Waiver Request:

Chairperson VanHise stated that Ms. Philippi is requesting an additional hardship relief; however, the problem is there is no other relief this Board is authorized to grant; however, we can hear some of the issues and Andy maybe could take back to Mr. Krawczun or maybe some issues we can address. We can issue a low to moderate or moderate to low.

Ms. Philippi has been in contact with COAH with regard to mortgage assistance, payment assistance. The Township has to do an ordinance because the Township does not have one in place.

Ms. McCloskey stated the Board should have some protocol and maybe where they can step out so the Board can discuss the issues.

The Board discussed some of the reasons why the affordable units are not selling.

Kathleen Philippi for Madeline Philippi, 57 Voscek Court (6:59 p.m.) – Patty spoke on behalf of her mother.

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Chairperson VanHise stated to Patty that the Board granted a hardship waiver and she is requesting further release from the Board. Patty explained that the place has been for sale for a long period of time and the one buyer they had that no one told him he could not apply for an FHA mortgage and that the Affordable Housing office did not tell him, so it fell through.

Chairperson VanHise asked why FHA did not grant a loan. Patty stated that the Affordable Housing Office should have told her that you cannot apply for an FHA loan per COAH. Chairperson VanHise stated we do not know where an applicant is going to apply for a loan and the applicant should be informed by the bank.

Patty stated that if you have someone who falls into a low or moderate income, the bank requires a 20% down payment for a conventional loan or \$20,000.00. The difficulty is if you have a low or moderate income candidate they are looking into an FHA loan instead of a conventional mortgage. Patty also stated Heather from COAH stated that the Townships have programs to assist in helping for a down payment.

Mrs. Philippi cannot afford to pay the mortgage and her mother has been living with her. Chairperson VanHise asked her what type of relief are they looking for and Patty asked to have the income restrictions to be lifted. Chairperson VanHise stated the Board does not have the power to do this and Heather from COAH stated we did and informed the Philippi's of what to ask for from this Board. If the Board not does grant the waiver then their hands are tied because it has been two years and they cannot get anyone to even look at it and it will be going into foreclosure because they cannot afford to pay the mortgage.

Mr. Link talked to Heather and told her that the Township does not have an ordinance. Patty stated to have the ordinance be waived. Chairperson VanHise stated you need to appear in front of Council because this Board cannot waive this ordinance. Patty again mentioned that she cannot believe that the Affordable Housing office did not tell them about applying for an FHA mortgage. Patty also complained about paying closing fees to a lawyer as well as the buyer. Patty again explained that the unit has been on the market for 1 ½ years; her Mom cannot live in it because it is a third floor unit and cannot get an FHA loan and is looking for a solution to the problem.

Chairperson VanHise stated this Board cannot do it; Mr. Link will talk to the Manager tomorrow and find out if the Township is willing to consider or an alternative or put a program in place and has to be discussed at the Township level. Patty stated how many more months she has to wait because it is an urgency and it is several thousand that is owned on the mortgage and is being held by Aurora Financial and paying double Homeowners insurance and utilities cannot be turned off.

Patty stated there is clearly a hardship and that Mrs. Philippi cannot climb stairs and is unhealthy; they did what was required (sent out letters, went through three realtors and made every effort to cooperate and is asking for help). Chairperson VanHise stated the Board cannot grant this waiver and Mr. Link will call her back. Patty asked if there is a time period to get an answer and hopefully we will have a plan of action in two weeks.

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Chairperson VanHise explained what the process is and what needs to follow. Chairperson VanHise stated the Board granted a release and we cannot grant the hardship she is requesting. Patty stated that they will not pay the mortgage and the unit will go into foreclosure; the family is done and will let it go and will not pay utilities, will not pay the homeowners association fees and taxes. Hopefully a decision from us within two weeks will change their decision.

Chairperson VanHise stated that the Township's spending plan does not include the down payment assistance being requested and if a program is created then it needs to be approved by COAH and no one knows when COAH will meet.

VI. Status of Changes at State Level:

There are no changes.

VII. Other Business:

Ms. Boddie came in and spoke to the Board regarding someone purchasing affordable units. Mr. Link stated the affordable units were in foreclosure and that is how those units were purchased.

VII. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m. The next meeting will be held on October 17, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

Susan Snook
Secretary

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