

Housing Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday November 9, 2009
5:00 p.m. City Hall – Council Chambers

Attending: Councilor David Marshall, Chair, Councilor Kevin Donoghue, T.J. Martzial, HNS Division, Lori Paulette, Economic Development; Councilor John Coyne was absent.

Item 1. Approve Minutes from October 6, 2009

Councilor Donoghue moved that the meeting minutes from October 6, 2009 be approved. Chair Marshall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Item 2. Tax Acquired Property Committee

T.J. Martzial said the Tax Acquired Property Committee (TAPC) started meeting regularly again after a hiatus. The committee is looking at rules and making amendments about how to make the process run smoother, a transparent process that brings in the Housing Committee in at certain points where they had not been involved previously.

Lori Paulette said the previous rules were not clear. There are proposed changes such as how the Land Bank relates to TAPC. The Land Bank was making recommendations on tax acquired property to the City Council and TAPC was not in the loop, although they are responsible for managing the properties. The Land Bank and TAPC will now get a list of tax acquired properties at the first of each year. The Land Bank will have 60 days to make recommendations to TAPC. The TAPC will then make a list of properties the City should retain and those to sell. Public Services and Planning will be involved. Residential property recommendations will be referred to the Housing Committee, commercial recommendations to the CDC. Councilor Donoghue asked how it will be determined if a property should be listed as residential. Ann Freeman responded that a property may be residential if it is in a residential zone or if it is in the B3 zone (a commercial zone that allows residential properties).

Lori said that the first step would be that the property owner is given the chance to redeem, or pay all back taxes. If further action is required, a survey goes out to all City department heads soliciting input on uses for the property. The Land Bank will be part of the survey. T.J. Martzial's responsibility, as a member of TAPC, is to flag housing opportunities. Steps for sale will follow a marketing method. After the survey, TAPC will determine an acceptable minimum price, any neighborhood issues that would require a conditional sale will be covered, and then the property will be brought to the Housing Committee. All property owners within a 500 foot radius will be notified; that was not clear before. Abutters have the right to purchase the property outright only if it is a vacant, undersize property.

There will be a stated due date. TAPC will review offers, and then it goes to either the Housing Committee or the CDC. An abutter purchase does not require approval from the HC or the CDC; it goes straight to management. T.J. said this will be sort of a case by case basis as it is hard to get "one size fits all" rules.

Councilor Donoghue asked about properties that come in after the first of the year, at intervals after that. Are they held for 11 months? Lori said the Treasury forecloses in December each year. They compile the list at the end of December, beginning of January. Ann Freeman said that there is a state statute requiring an 18 month redemption period.

Lori said this is going to the CDC on November 18; they will review and bring it to the City Council in December.

Public Comment:

Charles Bragdon, 31 Munjoy South – Why would the City take away the threshold of properties of \$5000 or less. Why are these properties being removed?

Lori said properties were previously listed as vacant and undersized. If you check out the value, the terms vacant and undersized don't really matter. Value is more or less dependent on whether the lot is buildable.

Councilor Donoghue made a motion to refer the item to the CDC. Chair Marshall seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Marshall said there would be no more meetings in 2009. There will be a new Housing Committee with a new Chairperson. He asked that T.J. prepare a report of all work for the new Housing Committee, to show where we have been and where we are going.

Gianna of Homeless Voices for Justice, 19 Portland Street, asked if the issue of "a project of special merit" with regard to the Housing Replacement Ordinance be put on the next agenda. Chair Marshall recommended that she consult with the new Chairperson.

Councilor Donoghue made a motion to adjourn, Chair Marshall seconded it. The motion was passed unanimously.

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