

## HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday February 5, 2008  
5:30 – 7:30 pm City Hall Room 209**

A meeting of the Portland City Council's Housing Committee was held on Wednesday, February 5, 2008 at 5:30pm in City Hall Room 209. Attendance: Chair Councilor Jill Duson and members Councilor Kevin Donoghue and Councilor Nick Mavodones. City Staff: T.J. Martzial, HNS Division Director, Alex Jaegerman, Planning Division Director, Rick Knowland, Senior Planner, Amy Grommes Pulaski, HCD Program Manager (notetaker).

Councilor Duson calls the meeting to order.

### **1. Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2008**

*Councilor Donoghue moves to accept minutes. Councilor Duson seconds, passes unanimously.*

### **2. Meeting Minutes on DVD?**

Councilor Duson introduces the concept of audio/video recording the Housing Committee meetings. Councilor Donoghue is unsure he is comfortable using recording equipment.

Councilor Duson finds it difficult to find information she is looking for when reviewing the details of other meetings. The information captured in the CD/DVD is inaccessible. The Councilors discuss the pros and cons of using public recording for meetings. If recording occurs, Councilor Donoghue would like the meetings to be downloadable. Councilor Donoghue suggests putting times as part of the written minutes so councilors can find the info on the DVD.

*Councilor Duson moves to accept recording housing committee meetings with indexing topics by time in the written minutes. Councilor Donoghue seconds, passes unanimously.*

### **3. HOME Program Consortium with Cumberland County**

T.J. introduces the HOME Consortium in partnership with Cumberland County and Aaron Shapiro. They have presented the information to Portland City Manager Joe Gray, Town of Brunswick Town Council and many others. Agreement documents need to be completed by June 10. Portland will be held harmless, and will still receive the same amount of HOME funds they do now and there is a possibility of receiving more. Portland will be the lead entity, and will also receive a bit extra administration funds to administer the consortium.

Councilor Donoghue asks who will be eligible. TJ responds that the money in the HOME Consortium will be eligible to four entities: Portland, Brunswick, Westbrook, plus the 23 communities that have currently joined the Cumberland County block grant, including South Portland. The only communities in Cumberland County who will not be involved are Chebeague Island and Fry Island.

Councilor Donoghue asks what elected officials will influence this. Aaron Shapiro answers; in the City it will continue to be Housing Committee, at the county level it will be the county commissioners (currently 23), plus the governing bodies of Westbrook and Brunswick.

Councilor Duson asks whether the City of Portland will be held harmless and won't lose the money currently received. This is confirmed by Aaron Shapiro.

Councilor Donoghue asks whether there will be additional strain on City staff? TJ and Aaron confirm this. Aaron confirms that the city will be compensated based on the 10% home administration capped limit. TJ states that the city already runs a HOME program, so the learning curve will be limited, however there will be extra work creating the consortium and entering the additional data. He expects the first year might require a moderate amount of extra time but that should improve as systems and procedures are implemented. T.J. doesn't foresee an overwhelming workload. Aaron Shapiro comments that it will likely be Deb Marquis and Elly Webber as the primary city employees working on the financial data entry end of the program. T.J. also notes that the extra administrative workload will depend on the number of HOME projects authorized by the Consortium in any given year.

Councilor Duson would like to see a full HOME budget.

Councilor Donoghue asks the benefit of the City of Portland being a lead entity? T.J. responds that there are intangible benefits to the regional cooperation between Portland and other cities and towns in Cumberland County, and it would be a benefit to Portland to have affordable housing developed outside the City. Aaron stated that HUD recommended that the City of Portland should be lead entity based on their 14 yrs experience in HOME. What staff is seeking tonight is authorization from the Committee to send a "Letter of Intent" to HUD. Staff will return to the Committee in April or May with a draft Consortium Agreement.

Councilor Duson opens to public comment. There is none.

Aaron states the HOME consortium agreement will be brought to the Housing Committee in April or May. Pat Finnigan also led the creation of a HOME consortium in Lewiston/Auburn and he hopes to use her as a resource as well as use the Lewiston/Auburn Consortium Agreement as a model for ours.

*Councilor Donoghue moves passage with the documentation as stated. Councilor Duson seconds, passes unanimously.*

Councilor Duson thinks it's a good opportunity to foment this partnership among communities in Southern Maine to create more opportunities.

## **5. Portland Community Land Trust for Affordable Housing**

T.J. introduces the Community Land Trust (CLT) item and emphasizes the amount of work that goes into creating a CLT, and the staffing limitations we have. T.J. has asked HUD for a technical assistance grant, and is waiting for a response. He also indicates that there is some money available in the HNS budget to hire a consultant. He asks Amy to comment. She summarizes the reason this is before the committee, the need of affordable ownership options in the City of Portland and how much the city will benefit from having a Community Land Trust.

Councilor Duson opens the floor to public comment.

Brooke Brewer from the Island Institute is working with HOMEStart and has started researching how to create a Community Land Trust on Peaks and Cliff Island, she is interested in where Portland is in the process. T.J. questions whether it would be beneficial to have two land trusts, one for the islands and another on the main land. Brook responds that it is easier to leverage funds as a City as opposed to a small island community. She plans to continue working with the islands for creating land trusts, and would like to work with the City as well.

Councilor Donoghue asks Brooke where she is in the process and who is participating with HOMEStart. Brooke responds, Peaks has started the HOMEStart program, but Cliff is not on

board yet. They are applying for 501(c) 3 status. She will continue with the Island Institute until August and will look for further employment or funding opportunities by then.

Councilor Duson asks when we take this to Council. TJ says it's too early at this point, he thinks we need more information and data.

Councilor Duson would like a strategy, what recommendations for three organizing strategies. TJ hopes we will be able to utilize the HUD technical assistance to develop initial reviews and have strategy recommendations by March or April Housing Committee Meeting.

Councilor Donoghue asks where do we go if HUD cannot assist us? TJ says we would have to go to an RFP to hire a consultant. We would come back to the committee for approval. Staff may also go to Burlington to gather information. Staff is first seeking some cost-free technical assistance.

Councilor Donoghue jumps to the inclusionary zoning topic. He suggests getting technical assistance from HUD or Burlington on inclusionary zoning as well.

TJ states this could be a continuing item on the HC agenda, Councilor Duson would like these to be formed as action items rather than monthly updates.

TJ summarizes that staff will continue to explore and begin the process of creating the community land trust. Councilor Duson and Donoghue agree.

#### **4. Changes to the B2 Zone and Forest Avenue Corridor Study**

The presenter, Bruce Hyman currently with GrowSmart Maine, was not able to attend the meeting due to an illness. Alex gives a brief overview and promises more discussion at the next meeting.

Alex states that Bruce Hyman has already begun a study about dense development for housing and businesses in the area of Forest Avenue. Dense development helps to reduce transportation by having housing and businesses near transit options. There is a multifaceted nature of planning, high density development, housing, business and transit. Transit would become one of the key attributes that makes it work.

Alex has also had discussions at the staff level. They have upgraded the density on arterials, but don't know when it becomes an incentive. He wants the zoning to encourage infill development. He discusses Forest Ave between Morrills Corner and Woodfords Corner and the opportunities that exist for infill development. One example is Bayview Court, located above Backview Bicycle, which has 70 dwelling units on 30,000 sq. ft. plus first floor business.

All of this takes analysis and study, which brings him to staffing capabilities. There is a staffing freeze on city employees and there is a vacant senior planner position. After discussions with Joe Gray, Alex was encouraged not to take on any new tasks due to lack of staff capacity. Alex had hoped to utilize Bruce to do some work on this and get free advice and explore further scoping of the issue. Time is his limiting issue, because without new staff it is difficult to bring on this new task.

Councilor Duson states that she is pessimistic this topic will be able to be addressed this year considering the staffing freeze. Even if a new staff member comes on in April, it will be summer before they would be available and it is unlikely that this issue will be able to be addressed.

Councilor Donoghue suggests she talks to the City Manager about filling the position. He comments that he has had frequent conversations with the City Manager on this topic. He asks whether it is still being advertised. Alex is trying to advertise it, because of the two months typically needed between advertisements and filling a position. It is a funded position, 55% HCD, with about \$19,000 on the City side. But it's a blanket freeze and the City Manager is making no exceptions.

Councilor Donoghue asks the density of Walker Terrace in comparison to Backview Bicycle. Alex states that he will get back to him. He also asks the density of B2 or B2B? Alex replies that it's nearly as dense as R-6. You can focus on density and massing. He continues if the scope is narrow, it can be entertained. Councilor Donoghue continues- Florence House also got a contract zone, and asks this context. Alex replies that it is a mix of shelter, rooming house and apartments. The envelope was stretched to its maximum in this instance. Councilor Donoghue continues to say that there are three examples of B2 zones that have received contract zones that have been approved for higher density. Forest Ave supports further density by offering transit.

Next meeting will be Bruce's presentation, 30 minutes with questions.

## **6. Public Comment**

No public comment.

## **7. Committee Discussion**

Councilor Duson would like to push a design competition for a bike rack. Councilor Donoghue concurs. Councilor Donoghue suggests including this in the Public Art fund.

## **8. Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting Tuesday March 4, 5:30 Room 209**

The topics of the next meeting will include: inclusionary zoning, housing replacement ordinance, B2 Discussion, and Nathan Szantan's proposal.

Councilor Duson asks T.J. to forward the copy of the City's TIF Policy to Kay Rand

The Maple and Danforth project of Nathan Szanton's may be required to be a public hearing, neighbors will be noticed, because the developer is expected to request financial assistance from federal city funds. T.J. will contact the developer to confirm if he will be requesting financial assistance from the City at the March meeting. So it may not need to be a formal public hearing in March, if there is no request.

Councilor Donoghue asks the method of awarding HOME funds. He asks whether the motto is "We have funds, come and get it?" TJ confirms this. Councilor Donoghue would like to see this more formal. He is sensitive to the timeliness of convenience. Councilor Mavodones would like to see the program design for HOME funds and the process. TJ states that you can determine how to use the funds, or where you want to target the funds. An RFP may not be the best way to disburse funds. This will be an April agenda item.

*Councilor Donoghue moves to adjourn. Councilor Mavodones seconds, passes unanimously.*