

Town of Carlisle

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Office of
PLANNING BOARD

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Minutes January 17, 2023

Joint meeting with Select Board

Discussion of Draft 2022 Housing Production Plan

PB members joined the remote Select Board meeting already in progress, and Co-Chair **Court Herschelmann** called the PB's virtual meeting to order at 8:18 pm. Co-Chair **Madeleine Blake** and Members **Adelaide Grady, Sara Smith, Eric Adams, Peter Yelle**, and Town Planner **Julie Mercier** were present. Town Administrator Ryan McLane hosted the meeting on a Zoom platform.

Select Board (SB) members Barney Arnold (Chair), Dave Model, Kate Reid (also Affordable Housing Trust), Nathan Brown and Travis Snell were present.

Town Administrator Ryan McLane, Assistant Town Administrator Aubrey Thomas, Executive Assistant Jenn Gibbons, Assistant to Planner Gretchen Caywood, Alex Koppelman (MAPC), Mark Racicot (MAPC), Affordable Housing Trust members Beverly Shorey (Tophet Rd), Mark Levitan (Wolf Rock Rd), Christine Johnson-Battista (North Rd), Gina Fox (Westford St), Brian Waterson (Aberdeen Dr), Maureen Cosgrove (South St), and Cynthia Sorn (Carlisle *Mosquito*) were also in attendance.

SB member and CAHT Co-Chair Reid opened the CAHT meeting, and started this discussion, noting that the HPP update work was an outgrowth of the MP. Reid pointed out the MP recommendation corresponding to the HPP:

1. Develop and implement a strategic plan for the CAHT that includes implementing a public education program about fair housing and affordable housing and consistently maintaining and up to date HPP,
2. Explore strategies to promote housing diversity and allow development of "missing middle" housing in specified areas.
3. Explore strategies to promote housing affordability,
4. Consider other opportunities to produce housing, as outline in the HPP of that time, and
5. Reorganize staff to support housing-related initiatives.

Reid thanked the nine member volunteer HPP Advisory Committee for their work on this report, and noted that members Adelaide Grady and Maureen Cosgrove were in attendance. The Committee is comprised of representatives from a number of Town Boards. Reid pointed out that with no staff planner onboard at the time, the HPP was done without any Town staff support, and so Carlisle contracted with the MAPC to provide technical consulting to develop the HPP, with the funding for this provided by the CAHT and a State grant. Reid introduced consultant Alex Koppelman, Senior Regional Land Use and Housing Planner from and Marc Racicot, Director of Land Use, at MAPC.

Koppelman gave a presentation to the group with the goal of summarizing the HPP findings and Recommendations. He explained that working on this report allowed him to get to know the Town much better, and that the residents clearly value the recreational opportunities and open space in the Town, but noted that these green assets do provide constraints toward development of housing in the Town. Additionally wetlands impact many properties in town, and there is no water or sewer infrastructure. He noted that the recommendations of the HPP were developed taking these constraints into consideration.

Koppelman reviewed what qualifies as affordable housing, and the extent to which residents are cost burdened and extremely cost burdened with housing expenses. He reviewed the two categories of affordable housing – attainable housing that requires no more than 30% household income for monthly expenses, but is not in any way controlled to

maintain this affordability, and affordable housing that is deed restricted as such, and required by the State to cost no more than 30% of household income. The latter is available only to income eligible households. Koppelman reviewed the income requirements for eligibility for deed restricted affordable housing in the Boston area based on family size, noting that while the income numbers may seem high, it speaks to the very high cost of housing in the area.

Koppelman reviewed the Housing Needs Assessment contained in the HPP, noting that the margin of error may be larger due to smaller sample sizes in Carlisle, and that data aggregation was employed. One of the key findings is a household size/home size mismatch, with the average household at 2.78 family members and nearly all homes having 3 bedrooms. It is therefore harder for small families to afford homes in Carlisle. A second key finding is limited housing choice, with 92% SFH with a median price of \$1.3M. This represents the most expensive median SFH price of all context communities examined, making it very hard for those wanting to age in place or the next generation of Carlisle families wanting to stay in Carlisle. A third key finding is that there are only 59 Affordable Housing units on Carlisle's SHI, but approximately 360 income eligible households in town.

With the need verified, Koppelman pointed out that we know that it will be difficult to develop the needed housing due to development constraints, which are documented in detail in the HPP: zoning constraints, environmental constraints, water and sewer constraints. They looked at several development examples in other towns which also have limited water and wastewater infrastructure. From the constraints analysis and other information gathered, Koppelman explained that they analyzed parcels in town for development opportunity based on several criteria, and grouped the sites into several categories. He focused on "Site Type 2" – large vacant sites outside Town Center. Koppelman explained that residents were polled on what types of homes they would like to see on this type of site, and cluster/cottage housing was favored for this case. The HPP then prioritized four parcels of Site Type 2, all of which are privately owned at this time.

Overall, the HPP established 5 broad goals:

1. Create community awareness of housing needs
2. Produce and preserve "capital A" Affordable housing
3. Diversify housing options to provide "lower-case a" affordable housing
4. Affirmatively further fair housing, and
5. Expand and leverage infrastructure for smart growth

And developed Town strategies to support these goals:

1. Adopt a new cluster/cottage housing zoning bylaw
2. Add affordability requirements to the ROSC and SROSC permitting processes and work towards a town-wide inclusionary zoning policy
3. Create a vision to define the Town Center, and
4. Plan to comply with M.G.L. Chapter 3A.

The HPP also proposed strategies for the CAHT toward the plan goals including:

1. Utilize the LIP process and other State tools to facilitate affordable housing development
2. Create a coalition of development partners to help produce both types of affordable housing (small "a" and cap "A")
3. Establish a joint commission to procure land for affordable housing development with public OS
4. Work with development partners to prepare a MassWorks application to provide funding for water and sewer upgrades
5. Join a shared housing service office, and
6. Establish a first-time homebuyers and housing assistance program

the HPP provided high level suggestions for how to approach these goals and strategies.

Koppelman said the HPP provides a roadmap to proactively plan for development. It can also help Carlisle comply with 40B. He noted that the Town does not need to reach 10% of affordable units to have safe harbor from 40B developments because by adopting this plan, the Town could have a 2-year safe harbor period by adding just 17

units to the SHI. If the Town were to add 9 units, Carlisle would have a 1 year safe harbor from 40B. Also, if the recommendations of this report are implemented, it will help protect Carlisle's access to State funding.

SB Chair Arnold asked for questions from the SB. SB Member Model asked the overall objective. Reid said that she sees attainable or small "a" housing as a very important goal for the Town. She suggested that perhaps some of the OS required for a development can be lessened in favor of building affordable units, and to think of the situation as OS AND affordable housing, not either/or. Then the Town would need to work with the builder toward affordable housing, but the Town would be donating part of the OS for affordable housing. She noted that there are even prefab possibilities for the affordable units that could be just the same on the exterior.

CAHT member Mark Levitan asked what we have as tools to break the logjam for middle range housing. Stressing that we must make this a priority. The Town should decide where we can place cluster zoning. Levitan added that the Town must have a mindset that we must implement these tools, and not keep finding reasons we shouldn't, and that Carlisle is missing what contributions a more diverse resident base could make. The lack of housing diversity is therefore a detriment to our community. SB Member Brown noted that we need to look back at the SROSC and ROSC Bylaws and see what we can change to get affordable housing included. Levitan stressed that an affordability requirement must be built into the Zoning Bylaw.

HPP Committee Member and PB Member Grady responded to why alternative housing has not taken hold in her opinion. She suggested that it is due to low interest rates which have incentivized developers to build expensive homes. As interest rates increase, this changes, and developers will build to adapt to the high interest rates. Higher interest rates also tend to lower real estate values.

PB member Adams said that as a builder we think of the evolution of the building code, and the increased housing performance requirements will make housing more expensive at least in the short term. Adams stressed the need to incentivize greater density development and construction of smaller homes.

On discussion, PB Co-Chair Herschelman suggested that the PB go back and review the HPP and discuss it as a Board. He noted that with TP Mercier now onboard, her expertise and recommendations can be brought to the HPP. Co-Chair Herschelman stressed that there needs to be agreement between the SB and PB and then the CAHT can go to work. He offered to work with TP Mercier to make this happen. SB Chair Arnold said that she would be more comfortable being guided by the PB's and the TP's recommendations along with the HPP, and suggested that any comments/questions be submitted to TP Mercier.

At 9:28 pm, Adams moved and Co-Chair Herschelman seconded the adjournment of the PB meeting, and the motion was approved unanimously (6-0) by roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gretchen Caywood
Assistant to Planner
Carlisle Planning Board

List of documents associated with this meeting (available via the Planning office):

- Draft Housing Production Plan: https://www.carlislema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4547/Carlisle-HPP-Report-Final_1129_JointBoardReview?bidId=
- Presentation entitled "Carlisle Housing Production Plan [HPP], Joint Board Meeting 1/17/23"