

2008 Members of the Westborough Housing Partnership

Meets Monday evenings, 7:30pm, Forbes Room 23, as posted

****Lottery Application for 11 Indian Pond will be available on the website on August 8, 2008.****

Housing Partnership Membership

Steven Liedell, Chairman
Kristina Allen
Joann Wilkinson
Joan Pavolis
Gary Sanginario

Tim Dodd, Board of Selectmen Liaison

2007 Annual Report—Westborough Housing Partnership

In 2007 the Westborough Housing Partnership continued working with developers to move along plans for more affordable housing in Westborough.

The Partnership worked with developer Francis Zuretti, who is building Westboro Village, a transit-oriented village with affordable housing near the MBTA commuter rail station on Smith Valve Parkway. The development has been reduced from 65 to 60 affordable units due to a reduction in the total number of units being built. The developer has received final approval from the Board of Selectmen and hopes to start construction in late 2008 depending on the real estate market. The housing would be built in phases over a five-year period.

The Partnership also worked with developers Sotir Papalilo and Chris Christopher on the Park Place Condominium project for resident 55 years and older on Park Street. Due to concerns from the neighbors on the number of units and design of the project, the developers reduced the total number of units from 36 to 12 in a new design with three smaller buildings. This reduced the number of affordable units from nine to three. The new design was met with a positive reaction from the neighbors. Although the Partnership was disappointed with the reduced number of affordable units, the Partnership provided a letter of support to the Board of Selectmen for the amended plan. The developers must now resubmit the plan to the Department of Housing and Community Development for approval.

The Partnership worked with the homeowners of an affordable home in Indian Pond who were in danger of foreclosure. The foreclosure was able to be postponed, and the Housing Partnership is working with the homeowner and lender to ensure that the home

can be resold to an affordable buyer and continue to be an affordable home for the town of Westborough.

The Partnership has also been asked to come up with suggestions and ideas for how to effectively use funds from the Community Preservation Act to demonstrate its possible merit to the Town's affordable housing efforts. Member JoAnn Wilkinson is our representative on this Ad Hoc Committee to study the potential benefits of Westborough adopting the Community Preservation Act. Members of the partnership have contacted other towns that have passed the CPA to determine how they are using their available funds to promote affordable housing in their communities.

The Westborough Housing Partnership looks forward to its ongoing role as liaison between the Town and developers to ensure that Westborough offers housing for families of all income levels.

The Westborough Housing Partnership

Background

In the late 1960s there was an extreme shortage of "affordable" homes in Massachusetts, that is, homes that were affordable to families whose income was at or below 80 percent of the median income. Many affluent towns had instituted residential zoning requiring several acres per house lot, making it almost impossible for those of modest income to afford to buy a home in these areas. To counter this "snob zoning," in 1969 Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B was passed that mandated every municipality in Massachusetts to have at least 10 percent of its housing stock set aside as affordable. If a town did not meet this standard, developers could apply to the Zoning Board of Appeals under a comprehensive permit to build housing that was exempt from local density and other zoning regulations, as long as 25 percent of the development's units were "affordable."

Under Governor Dukakis, the state added financial incentives in a number of state housing programs to encourage developers to build affordable units. To help municipalities deal with the large number of developers interested in creating affordable rental or homeownership units, the Massachusetts Housing Partnership was created. Under state statute, each community could appoint its own Housing Partnership to facilitate the building of affordable housing under Ch.40B.

The Westborough Housing Partnership was formed in 1986 through Town Meeting vote, following the state statute, when the town had 4.13 % affordable housing. Over the years, the Housing Partnership has developed and refined local guidelines for affordable housing in Westborough that are based on state guidelines. These address the design, affordability, density, and environmental concerns; for example, the density should be no greater than 4 units per acre, as already existing in Westborough's downtown.

Developers interested in using the comprehensive permit and gaining greater density in return for affordable housing begin the process with the Housing Partnership. The Housing Partnership advises the developer what is acceptable according to the local guidelines and works to craft a reasonable proposal. The developer then submits the plan

to the Department of Housing and Community Development and to the local Zoning Board of Appeals with the support of the Housing Partnership. Affordable homes built under Ch.40B have long-term use restrictions in their deeds that keep them affordable for at least 15 years (and since 1991, in perpetuity).

Once the entire process is complete (and this may take up to five years), the developer builds the housing. The affordable homes must be indistinguishable from the market rate homes on the exterior and spread randomly throughout the development.

When construction is completed, the Housing Partnership conducts a lottery for the affordable homes. Lottery applications are available at the Town Hall and Library and income qualified applicants submit their applications to the Housing Partnership. With the local preference allowed under the Local Initiative Program, 80 percent of the homes can be allotted to people who grew up in Westborough, have relatives in Westborough, or work in Westborough. The Housing Partnership reviews all applications and meets with applicants to inform them of the deed restrictions and to verify their qualifications. A lottery is then held, and the winners are listed in order of their selection. This list is maintained for several years. When other affordable homes come up for resale, the lottery winners are given preference to buy the property in the order of the list on file.

History of Westborough Housing Partnership

The first affordable single family homes developed with the Housing Partnership were 13 homes built in 1991 on surplus Lyman School property, known as North Hill. This Lawtons' Way development, built under the Home Ownership Program (HOP), offered 50 percent of its units as affordable.

In the early 1990s, the state created the Local Initiative Program (LIP) that offered "technical assistance" instead of financial incentives from the state. With the LIP developments, developers had to obtain the approval of the housing proposal from the chief elected officer of the town before submitting the plan to the state.

Affordable developments under the LIP program include:

- Indian Pond with 9 affordable single family homes;
- Park Place with 3 over-55 condominiums (under development).

Affordable Rental Units that the Housing Partnership has worked on include:

- Avalon West with 120 rental units and
- Avalon Mills with 280 rental units (25% affordable)

- Westboro Village with 60 units

In 2006 and 2007, the Westborough Town Meeting approved the Transit-Oriented Westborough Village to include 60 units of affordable housing as part of its overlay zoning. This housing development is part of Westborough's master plan to increase affordable housing in town and, with its special zoning, does not fall under a comprehensive permit.

The Westborough Housing Authority focuses its attention on rental units for low income families in town. The rental housing managed by the Housing Authority, as well as those under the jurisdiction of the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, all count toward Westborough's affordable housing numbers. Westborough has constructed or permitted affordable housing that brings the town over the 10 percent mark as required under Ch. 40B.

The charge of the Housing Partnership is to encourage continued construction of well-designed, well-built affordable homes so that people of all economic levels can find a suitable home in Westborough.