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## ***Lexington Housing Partnership***

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### **Meeting Minutes for December 4, 2014**

**Attendees:** Melinda Walker, Harriet Cohen, Betsey Weiss, Wendy Manz, Bob Pressman, Mary Haskell, Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti, Joe Pato, Jeri Foutter

**Guests:** Elizabeth Rust (Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO)), Bonnie Brudner, Lalanee Foster, Aaron Henry (Town of Lexington Assistant Planning Director)

**Absent:** Erica Endyke, Bill Kennedy, Paul Linton

The meeting was chaired by Betsey Weiss and the minutes were taken by Harriet Cohen. The meeting was called to order at 7:36 pm.

Ms. Rust notes that her new email address is [liz@RHSOhousing.org](mailto:liz@RHSOhousing.org)

#### **1. Approve Minutes 9/18/14 and 10/30/14**

Mr. Pressman moved that the minutes be approved; Ms. Walker seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes was approved unanimously.

#### **2. HOME Strategic Plan review –Beth Rust and Aaron Henry**

Lexington receives about \$25,000 per year from the HOME program for affordable housing programs that meet the HOME requirements. In the past, funds have been used for the Douglas House and for Lexington Housing Authority renovation of a duplex owned by the Authority.

Ms. Rust and Mr. Henry have brought the *LEXINGTON FY16-20 Consolidated Plan Needs Assessment and Market Analysis* to the Lexington Housing Partnership (LHP) for review prior to its submission. The Plan proposes consideration of a HOME-Funded Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program, and the LHP agreed that this idea for using funds is worth pursuing.

The LHP discussed the proposal with Mr. Henry and Ms. Rust. One amendment was proposed. After the discussion, Mr. Pressman moved that the LHP accept the HOME strategic plan as amended for the HOME Consortium. Ms. Corcoran-Ronchetti seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

#### **3. Update on Potential Parcel Lists (Liz Rust and Aaron Henry)**

Ms. Rust and Dan Gaulin (also of the RHSO) decided that it would be useful to propose a strategy and methodology for assessing parcels that have potential for development for affordable housing. They have proposed such a process: establish criteria for parcels suitable for such development; use the criteria to identify the candidate properties; advise the property owners of the LHP interest or simply review MLS listings regularly. In parallel, the LHP would determine the source of funds for purchase of said parcels, should they become available. If Community Preservation Act money provided the source of funds, this funding would need to be approved by Town Meeting.

Ms. Rust and Mr. Gaulin provided a process guide and a set of example criteria for use by LHP.

#### **4. Discuss Housing Trust Concept (Liz Rust and Aaron Henry)**

LexHab was created by a special act of the legislature in the early 1980s. In the early-to-mid 2000s, the Massachusetts state legislature created guidelines for a housing trust, which can hold money,



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act as a developer and an entity to create and preserve affordable housing. Such trusts are created by Town Meeting, and the enacting statute must accept the state law regarding the Trust. One of the trustees must be a selectman.

The Trust might be a useful vehicle for assuring that funds intended for affordable housing are separated from the general fund. For example, the Avalon monitoring funds are paid into the general fund; they could be paid into the Housing Trust instead. (It may be possible legally that the Avalon monitoring funds could be paid to the Lexington Housing Foundation, but it is unclear as to whether Avalon would accept such an arrangement.

Ms. Haskell, Ms. Foutter, Ms. Cohen, and Ms. Weiss volunteered to serve on a subcommittee to investigate the advisability of housing trust, a potential charter, and other aspects of a housing trust. Ms. Rust offered her assistance to the subcommittee as they perform their investigation.

(Note: research subsequent the meeting shows several useful links about housing trusts on the Massachusetts Housing Partnership [Municipalities web page](#).)

**5. Update on Planning Board Study to Limit Teardowns (Bob Pressman, Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti)**

Mr. Pressman reports that the Planning Board issued (received?) 92 demolition permits in the last fiscal year. He also reports that the Town Assessor and the Assessment Board are getting close to setting the tax rate for next year. There has been a 9% increase in the average assessment; the increase is higher at the lower end of housing prices, in part due to all of the teardowns.

Mr. Henry has convened a committee of people who had expressed interest in slowing the rate of home demolition permits.

**6. Report on Forum to Receive Input on Revision of Town Open Space & Recreation Plan (Bob Pressman)**

The Town has a 2009 Open Space and Recreation plan that covers a 5 year period. This plan makes the Town eligible to seek funds for open space purposes. Consultants are currently updating the plan, and have asked for input on their initial plans. There is an online survey; the LHP is requested to take the survey and add input as to the need to use some of the open space for housing.

**7. CPC Update (Bob Pressman)**

In 2014, there were no applications for housing funds; 10% of the funds will be banked for housing projects.

**8. LHP Members Running for Town Meeting**

Ms. Weiss asked that LHP members consider running for Town Meeting.

**9. Discussion about a minimum number of meetings per year for voting members**

This discussion was postponed until a subsequent meeting.

**10. Fall Op-Ed (Melinda Walker)**

Ms. Walker has a draft of the op-ed piece. She will send out a draft for review

**11. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, Jan. 22**

The LHP will meet on Jan. 22



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### **12. New Chair, New Vice-Chair**

Ms. Walker has accepted the role of LHP Chairperson. She requests that her role be referred to as the Convener. New vice-chair???

### **13. New Business**

Cambridge Savings Bank is getting an award (get info from Jeri)

### **14. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn: Ms. Weiss moved that the meeting be adjourned, Ms. Cohen seconded the motion and the motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:26 pm.