



CITY OF BIDDEFORD

Planning and Development Department

Mayor's Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting Minutes

Date: August 23, 2022
Time: 5:30 PM
Location: Hybrid Meeting: City Council Chambers & Remote Access Meeting (1MRSA § 403-B permits public proceedings through remote access during the declaration of state of emergency due to COVID-19).

Committee Members in Attendance:

Doris Ortiz, Reverend Shirley Bowen, Dan Boucher, Marty Grohman (via zoom), Ian Garcia-Grant, Dominic Deschambault, Ciel Caldwell (via zoom), & Seth Harkness
Staff Present: Jim Bennett & Nan Whitten

Chair Ortiz brought the meeting to order at 5:30

1. Acceptance of minutes from 6-28-22 and 7-26-22

MOTIONS:

Minutes were accepted by a unanimous vote

2. Affordable Rental Units-5 Year Goal

- Jim Bennett discussed the Task Force's decisions of last month's meeting to go from 450 new housing units to 900 from 2023-2028 with 12.5 % affordable by 2028. He told the committee if the City just maintained what there is now Biddeford would become less affordable and lose the Blue Collar Community dynamics.
- The committee discussed how Mr. Bennett arrived at the 12.5% and how \$500,000.00 given to the City for affordable housing will make a difference.
- Mr. Bennett talked about an affordable housing trust where once a year it will be used for various goals.

MOTIONS:

Deschambault-Motion-to create 900 rental units between 2023 and 2028

Boucher-Second

Chair Ortiz called for a vote-motion passed unanimously

Boucher-Motion-to have 12.5% of rental units be affordable housing by 2028

Garcia-Grant-Second

Chair Ortiz called for a vote-motion passed unanimously

- The definition of affordable housing was discussed

- Some of the committee members did not want to include the moderate-income ratio of 81%-125% in the definition, as it is counterproductive to the goals of the committee. They would prefer instead to say up to 80%.
- Others felt that using up to 125% would give more flexibility and allow some to be able to purchase a home and not be house poor.
- There is also the fear that going up to 125% would allow developers and those less needy to come in and purchase any inventory leaving the lower levels out in the cold.
- There is a housing crisis and committee members want to send a message to the City Council that young families cannot afford to stay in the communities and must move to other areas.

MOTIONS:

Garcia-Grant-Motion-have the wording on the memo going to Council say “up to 80%”

Caldwell-Second

Chair Ortiz called for a vote-motion passed 5-2 (Deschambault, Bowen, Boucher, Caldwell & Garcia-Grant in favor; Harkness & Grohman opposed)

3. Inclusionary Zoning

- Mr. Bennett went through the 2022 Greater Portland Market Outlook by the Boulos Company. He told the committee that Inclusionary Zoning is when a housing project of a certain size comes to the city a certain percentage of the new units must be affordable housing. The developer can avoid having any affordable housing units by paying a fee directly to the city.
- The City of Portland instituted this policy and it was very effective until the referendum in November of 2020. The result was that high end rentals were the only things being built and it pushed the lower end out.
- This can be an effective tool but push back should be expected.
- Greg Mitchell will do a presentation on Inclusionary Zoning and will be able to answer any questions the committee may have.

4. Unhoused Recommendation

- Different recommendations to assist the unhoused were discussed:
Hire a consultant who is laser focused on the issue and has a proven track record, create and utilize rooming houses
- There were some concerns about hiring a consultant such as how the specialist would be chosen and that it could be a lengthy process if they have to do an RFP.
- Mr. Bennett was asked about the turnaround time for finding a consultant. He told the committee to put together a statement to the council saying that there is a need to tackle this issue permanently and that you would like them to hire experts in the field. The minimum requirement for general assistance, which is being done, is not working for this community.

MOTIONS:

Deschambault-Motion-to create a declaration for Council asking them to deal With the issue of the unhoused.

Garcia-Grant-Second

Chair Ortiz called for a vote-motion passed unanimously

5. Affordable Housing Fund

The Committee talked about various ways to manage funds donated or raised for affordable housing. Mr. Bennett told them how something like this usually worked.

MOTIONS:

Deschambault-Motion-to create an Affordable Housing Fund

Boucher-Second

Chair Ortiz called for a vote-motion passed unanimously

6. Competitive Process for Projects

The committee talked about the process of jumping the line for approvals when your project is offering affordable housing.

7. Non-Monetary Recommendations

The Committee talked about non-monetary ways to assist affordable housing such as jumping the approval line, using bonus density, offering discounts when no parking is needed.

8. Rent Control

Mr. Bennett discussed the White paper on Rent Control, he suggested each committee member read the documents and make recommendations at the next meeting. He also discussed 2 rent control studies and talked about the impact on the market and the results when the units went back to market rate.

9. Brainstorm for recommendations to the Council:

Use the blighted, abandoned properties, give tenants the first right of refusal when property is to be sold, the City helps facilitate Co-ops, use the old courthouse for the homeless at least for the winter, Community Land Trusts to purchase the structure not the land, use City owned properties to house people at least on a temporary basis, tiny home village, pallet housing, talk to Habitat for Humanity, and boarding houses.

10. Next Meeting: September 27, 2022, work on action items.

11. Adjourn: 7:04 PM

Task Force Chair

Date

These minutes are summary and are not intended to be verbatim. Archived meetings are viewable on the City's website: www.biddefordmaine.org.