

LINCOLN HOUSING COMMISSION

Minutes

Wednesday, June 1, 2022 7:00 p.m.

Members present via Zoom: Allen Vander Meulen, Chair; Evan Gorman, Vice Chair; Victoria Benalfew, Rachel Drew, Terry Perlmutter (COA&HS Liaison). Rakesh Karmacharya was unable to attend.

Also present: Elaine Carroll, Housing Commission Administrative Assistant.

The meeting was called to order by Allen Vander Meulen, Chair, at 7:06pm as a virtual meeting pursuant to Gov. Baker's March 12, 2020 order, as extended on June 15, 2021 with the Governor's signing of Senate Bill #2475, suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

1. Introduction: our New Selectboard Liaison / Jennifer Glass

Jennifer introduced herself and outlined the scope of her liaisons on behalf of the Select Board, for the coming year, which includes the Housing Commission, the Housing Trust, Conservation, Planning, Green Energy, and IDEA.

Jennifer mentioned that there is a lot of activity in the State Legislature to allow hybrid meetings going forward after the virtual meeting order expires in July, but a definitive statement for a new policy is still in flux.

2. Maintenance & Tenant Issues

- a. 75 Tower Maintenance (Bath Fan, external rot, trees, roof, pest control)
 - Evan reported that there are no tree issues at present, despite tenant concerns.
 - 75A does have a filter over the stove, but it does not vent to the outside.
 - 75B's upstairs bathroom fan vents into the attic, but not directly outside. There is a vent visible from the ground, but we are not sure what it is for. Gerry will investigate. Gerry inspected the fan and confirmed there are no mold issues with it at present.
 - Evan will be inspecting the roof for rot and other issues and will also soon be reviewing the maintenance agreement with Waltham Pest Control, as we are not sure if our expectations are in line with what they are doing (and billing us for).
- b. 26 Sunnyside
 - The new mailbox has been mounted for the tenant by Gerry, making it possible for her to access her mailbox without going down the ramp. The USPS has approved the new box and the old streetside box will be removed.
 - The commission reconsidered the request to add a second wheelchair ramp for the tenant at the rear entrance to house. But given that it is not ADA required, the expense involved in doing so, that it will disrupt the tenant's new "dog area" behind the house, and that the tenant is mobile enough to exit through that door in case of fire, the commission would rather avoid undertaking this at this time.
- c. Driveway and yard repairs
 - Allen will appear before the Conservation Commission at their June 22 meeting to discuss and hopefully gain their approval in concept (and subject to approval of the finalized plans) of our intention to remove the ancient driveway curb that is causing erosion issues, do minor some landscaping, and add rock (rip-rap) where erosion is occurring along the road.

3. Tenant Recertification

- a. Discussion: Factors and Timeline for recertification
Allen outlined the factors impacting the proposed timeline for this effort (that drives the deadlines that will be given in the letter to the tenants): a month from the date of reception of the letter for the tenants to get their paperwork together and submitted. 2-3 weeks for the RHSO to complete the certifications, and the tenants must be given two weeks notice (per the lease) of any rent changes.
- b. Draft of proposed recertification policy & penalties (*vote expected*)
Send last letter and lease template to Victoria. Rachel will provide current FHA market rates for 1, 2, 3 & 4 bedroom units, so that they can be included in the letter. (We will warn tenants that failure to get the recertification done on time will result in their rent reverting to market rates.)
Victoria will email final draft to all for comment, work with Allen & Elaine

4. **Diversity**

- a. Rachel distributed the following Revised Mission Statement:
"The Lincoln Housing Commission is a welcoming and inclusive group that works to fulfill the town's mission and ensure a range of diverse housing options are available in town to meet the current and future needs of Lincoln's residents. We fulfill this mission by: developing and promoting policies, programs, and regulations that preserve and/or increase housing that addresses such needs; maintaining Lincoln's inventory of housing affordable for low- and moderate-income households in compliance with state policy; and supporting town, regional, and state housing goals. The Housing Commission also administers Lincoln's town-owned rental housing units."
- b. Rachel Drew moved for approval of the revised mission statement. Evan Gorman seconded. Roll Call Vote: Victoria Benalfew – aye; Evan Gorman – aye; Rachel Drew – aye; Allen Vander Meulen – aye. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- c. It was noted that we should revise the housing commission web page at LincolnTown.org to include the revised mission statement. It was also agreed there is quite a bit of other material there that is out of date and should be revised.
- d. Jennifer Glass suggested sharing the new mission statement more widely than just on the Commission's web page; and offered to help such as placing it in the Select Board's newsletter (the final issue of the year will soon be published). Jennifer also suggested it would be good to note the origin and history of this effort (it originated in Rachel's work with WIDE). It was felt that a similar or identical announcement should be placed in the Lincoln Squirrel and possibly LincolnTalk. Rachel will also send the announcement to Terry to be put in the COA&HS Newsletter.

5. **Status: Liaison position descriptions & selection process**

Rachel reported on her progress and plans for this effort. Jennifer asked about Select Board discussion of Housing Commission vs. Housing Authority. Jennifer related the discussion, which was one of due process with regards to the proposed changes in the HC's membership. Looking at whether the current Housing Commission/Housing Trust structure is the best for serving Lincoln's needs; and examining other models (such as a Housing Authority) to see if they are a better fit. Given the layers of approval needed – beginning with Town Meeting, we will need to examine and be prepared to answer such questions anyway.

- a. Allen will send a note to Liz Rust (RHSO) and Kathleen O'Donnell asking for their input on these issues, and possibly schedule a discussion with them at a future HC meeting.

6. SLPAC status

Rachel reported that SLPAC continues to be on hold, with no meetings or other activity at this time.

7. IDEA

In Rakesh's absence, Jennifer reported that IDEA has sent out an RFP for the consultant to help the town in this effort. James Craig has stepped down as Chair as a result of leaving the Select Board. Rob Stringer and Jennifer are co-chairing IDEA for now.

8. COA&HS

Terry reported that the COA&HS is very excited about the Water Bill rebate program and its reception so far: it will have a big positive impact for many Lincoln residents.

Terry will talk with Abby about the status of the Emergency Rental program and report on this at the next meeting.

9. Affordable Accessory Apartment Program - Status Update

Allen reported that progress is being made on setting up the forms and processes for the AAA program. He hopes to have most of this work done by the end of the month. There are still serious concerns about whether the program is viable, as the State-mandated processes for management and selection of tenants will be much more restrictive and challenging than we were originally led to believe.

10. Finances

Allen will distribute the updated "Revolving Fund Tracker" spreadsheet once he receives the monthly report from accounting.

The work at 75 Tower will significantly impact our bottom line.

Jennifer said another round of applications for funding from the remaining ARPA funds will likely occur this fall. She encouraged us to think about additional possible projects – such as new heating systems - for inclusion in our ARPA application. She also suggested at least asking for ARPA funds to cover revenue lost due to the rent freezes and reductions during the COVID shutdown; and noted that MASS SAVES might cover the costs of new non-fossil fuel-based (i.e., heat pump) systems (Evan is already looking into this).

11. Approval of Minutes from May 4, 2022

Evan moved for approval of minutes as written. Rachel seconded. Roll Call Vote: Victoria Benalfew – aye; Evan Gorman – aye; Rachel Drew – aye; Allen Vander Meulen – aye. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Summer Meeting Schedule

- a. The commission agreed there is no need for a meeting at the beginning of July, unless an urgent issue arises in the meantime. Our next regular meeting will be August 3rd.
- b. Terry noted that Liz Rust had said she could not meet with us on Wednesday evenings. It was agreed that once the summer is past, we will consider changing the normal schedule to better accommodate Liz's (and others') schedules. Our future schedule may also be impacted by whether the State continues to allow virtual (or hybrid) meetings.

13. Liaison to Community Center Building Committee in future

Evan asked about the process involved for the development, approval, construction (and oversight) of the new Community Center. Jennifer said it would be very similar to the process used for the new School project. A liaison from the Housing Commission would be welcome. How much of a time commitment this would be is TBD, but based on her experience, Jennifer felt the amount of time needed will vary; although it is not as big of a project as the School was. Allen encouraged Commission members to speak to him about being a Liaison if they are interested and said we put talking about this on our next meeting's agenda.

14. Adjourn

Rachel Drew moved to adjourn, Victoria Benalfew seconded. Roll Call Vote: Victoria Benalfew – aye; Evan Gorman – aye; Rachel Drew – aye; Allen Vander Meulen – aye. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:01pm.