

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8:30 A.M., MARCH 10, 2025
PHILLIP L. PITTORE JUSTICE CENTER, 25 SOUTH UNION STREET
MEETING MINUTES

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mayor Nowick called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and he asked the City Clerk to read the statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act into the record.

The City Clerk read the following statement into the record: *This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act with the meeting notice provided to the Trenton Times and the Hunterdon County Democrat. This meeting is being streamed live and recorded using the Zoom Meeting Platform. The meeting agenda provides for action items known at the time of publication and is subject to change.*

ROLL CALL

Present: Brian Kelly (via phone), Michelle Harris, Paul Kuhl, Paul Stevens, Julia Taylor, David Minno, Sean Goodwin, Councilman Lide, Andrew J. Nowick, and Cynthia Ege.

Also present: Elaine Clisham – CCH, Kelly Grant - Malamut

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Nowick led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Mayor Nowick asked if everyone had a chance to review the meeting minutes and if there were any edits. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adopt the minutes as submitted. Councilman Lide made the motion, and Paul Kuhl seconded the motion. An affirmative voice vote was taken in favor of the motion by all members present. MOTION CARRIED.

NORWESCAP

Mark Valli, CEO of NORWESCAP was present to give an overview of services they provide to municipalities. He stated that they currently have limited capacity to develop Affordable Housing, however he will be presenting a business plan to the board members of NORWESCAP to ramp up capacity. They plan to develop 5 – 7 units a year and then believe the program should be self-sustaining. NORWESCAP recently completed one (1) ground up market to affordable unit, and one (1) rehab in Phillipsburg. They also are the property manager for Robin Hill, an apartment complex for Affordable Housing, however, he does not have much information on that project. Once the business plan is adopted by the board, they will be ready and willing to work with the City of Lambertville on our Affordable Housing projects.

Board members asked questions and Mr. Valli provided responses to the following questions:

What are the challenges? Staffing capacity.

How was it funded? Neighborhood Revitalization Program, Housing Trust Funds, grants.

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Once built, who manages the rental units? The focus has been on ownership because it is simpler.

Do you have an estimate on the cost to rehabilitate a unit? You have to do an environmental review, plan for everything that comes your way. The first was a rehabilitation of a former bar, the property was over 2,000 square feet and the rehabilitation was about \$300,000.00, and we probably should have spent more.

Mr. Valli will get back in touch with the City once the business plan is approved by their board.

FAQ SHEET– Julia Taylor and Sean Goodwin

Julia Taylor reported that the draft is finished, and it will be emailed out to everyone today. She reported that she will work with the city to retitle things on the website so that they are easier to find.

TIMELINE AND HOUSING ELEMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLAN DISCUSSION

Mayor Nowick reviewed the Timeline with the members and the public.

The Vacant Land Analysis and the Compliance Plan will be reviewed by the AHAC at the March 26, 2025, session.

Vacant Land Analysis: Elaine reported that she has been collaborating with Crystal Lawton, and they have identified two vacant parcels, however, neither will support Affordable Housing. Therefore, we will be able to justify the zero for the realistic development.

The Compliance Plan is essentially a summary of things the city is going to do to satisfy our unmet need. We will adopt overlay ordinances that will provide for a number of units, study the area to determine if it meets the criteria for an Area in Need of Redevelopment to allow for residential development. We only need to prove that we can deliver 25% of the unmet need through repurposing of properties that can be used for Affordable Housing. We are carrying three units from Heritage Village into the fourth round. This reduces our number from 39 to 36 units and the 25% of the unmet need equals 9 or 10 units that we will need to deliver. If one overlay generates 10 units, we could conceivably be done. This will be adopted by resolution of the Governing Body at the April 17th session.

Properties Located in the Flood Plain may be disqualified from being used for Affordable Housing unless the emergency egress is out of the flood plain. This could be a constraint on 295 North Main Street property. A resolution could be to include the property in the Area in Need of Redevelopment that is located next to the site for means of egress. This is true for third and fourth round Affordable Housing Units. Anything developed after the Inland Flood Rule was adopted is subject to the rule. Elaine recommends an engineer review the properties.

Determining the Density for properties was discussed. Elaine Clisham explained that the minimum is 6 units per acre. You also need to look at the neighborhood which could increase the density.

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There are two competing interests that need to be considered. They include determining the minimum density for Affordable Housing, and then is it consistent with the city's Master Plan?

Housing Element and Fair Share Plan Discussion will be at the May 12, 2025, AHAC Meeting

HOUSING ELEMENT – THIRD ROUND

What was completed and what was not completed?

The last step for the Police Station Redevelopment was to contract with a redeveloper by the end of 2021. This did not happen. If we are moving forward with the Police Site, we need to put out another RFP to find a redeveloper.

Discussion ensued about the process. This has caused confusion with the public who question how we ended up with this level of restriction for five (5) units?

We have different people serving as the Court Adjudicator, the City Planner (same company, different planner), and a different Mayor since 2020 so memory is not there.

Kelly Grant, the Affordable Housing Attorney for the City explained that Fair Share Housing wanted to see affordable housing units built in the City. We kept going back and forth, and the city administration was adamant that the police site was going to be built, the timeline was agreed upon and imposed, and the rest of our Unmet Need obligation is overlay. It was a tradeoff for removing condemnation from the Lambertville High School project and not adopting the inclusionary overlay on the Closson property.

The RDP language was reviewed. The City must try to provide for unmet need. The law does not require that we build anything, we can make the argument, but if we can find five (5) units somewhere else, is that a way to meet that? The Affordable Housing Attorney, Kelly Grant, commented that the City needs five (5) units, and we do not know if Fair Share will agree to the substitution of Habitat for-sale units in place of the proposed units on the Police Station site. We will need to open the settlement agreement and then the court will need to agree to the switch. The current Settlement Agreement requires us to solve for five (5) family rental units.

DRAFT LIST OF PROPERTIES

Mayor Nowick gave an update on his conversations with the property owners listed on the Properties to Investigate List. He met with 12 property owners and sent some confidential notes to the City Planners regarding the viability of the properties.

The Mayor had discussions with the following property owners who are not interested in exploring Affordable Housing: David Rago; Niece Lumber, Diamond Silver (DEP list of capped sites), Finkle's site (filing an application with Planning Board that does not include residential units); and the Lambertville Station.

Mayor Nowick also spoke with the following property owners who voiced varying levels of interest:

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Alan Abramson, owner of CVS who is discussing it with his attorney; The lease is up in June of 2026 with CVS. Discussion regarding the footprint of the building ensued. CVS is exploring a new business model to leverage its purchase of Aetna which may exclude the sale of groceries and other stuff.

Closson Farm/Holcombe Farm is on the March 20th agenda to adopt a resolution authorizing Habitat for Humanity to move forward with planning for 6 affordable units at the log cabin site. Discussion regarding the way Fair Share Housing views owner occupied verses rental units. The Affordable Housing Attorney, Kelly Grant, commented that if you own, you have a mortgage. If the unit is part of an HOA, there are fees and people cannot keep up. It is not about availability of units; it is about what people can qualify for and afford to maintain. For these reasons, FSHC cares very much about rental units. Fourth Round bonus credits for the Habitat for Humanity units was discussed. This has been identified as an Area in Need of Redevelopment adopted by the Governing body. The Redevelopment Plan has to be written to include the use for Habitat for Humanity and Fisherman's Mark. Discussion ensued regarding 10 to 12 rental units at the Farm Market. Concern was expressed for finding someone to manage it.

Library Apartment's deed restriction will be done by Ordinance with first reading on the March 20th meeting agenda.

Maxwell Assets interested but the properties are in the flood plain.

Spoke Works Site: the owner expressed interest in partnering with the city.

South Hunterdon Apartments: the agreement expired. They are very interested in doing something with the site and with seeing the control move from the trust to the municipality. The building needs to be rehabilitated. This is a great opportunity but may take longer than the next 10 years. Full rehabilitation of the building requires relocation of residents. If the City takes ownership, they need to manage the units.

Coryell's Ferry on Lambert Lane: the owner has expressed some interest in the market to affordable. They are small one-bedroom units or studio apartments.

Southside Laundromat is interested in an overlay.

Wells Fargo's site is on the list, but Mayor Nowick has not spoken to the owner.

The following properties still need to be explored:

Verizon property on the corner of Church and North Main Street was discussed. It will be added to the list of properties for review.

The buildings located next to the Justice Center were added to the property list after last meeting. However, they are in the flood plain.

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75 South Union Street Update: this may not move forward as an Affordable Housing Unit over the garage.

Brian Kelly asked about the status of the Jesus School. Mayor Nowick responded that the City sent a letter to Father Robert, but we have not heard back from him.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mayor Nowick read the mission statement into the record.

The AHAC will develop a proactive, holistic strategy to meet Lambertville's NJ state-mandated affordable housing responsibilities. Through an open, transparent process, the committee will develop input to a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan that identifies pragmatic options to meet the City's collective remaining Third Round and new Fourth Round requirements while also reflecting broader community priorities and concerns raised by City residents. The AHAC will analyze and assess options and document a final recommendation for City council to consider.

NEXT STEPS

Mayor Nowick informed the members of the AHAC board that CCH will be presenting the draft Vacant Land Analysis and the compliance Plan to the membership at the March 26, 2025, session.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 a.m. with a motion made by Councilman Lide and seconded by Paul Stevens. An affirmative voice vote was taken in favor of the motion by all members present.
MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. Ege

Cynthia L. Ege
CMR, RMC, City Clerk