



## OBSERVER REPORT

**FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE (FHC)** – January 26, 2023 via Zoom  
LWVM Observer – Bonnie Grenier

Members Present -Thatcher Kezer (Chair and Town Administrator), Becky Cutting (Town Planner), Erin Noonan (Select Board), Debra Larkin, Mimi Hollister, Teri McDonough, Deacon John Whipple, Katie Farrell,  
Member absent: Dirk Isbrandsten

This was the first meeting of the reconstituted Fair Housing Committee with Thatcher, Becky and Erin having been voted in as new members.

The first order of business was to vote in a Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Debra Larkin, having chaired the previous committee, was voted in as Vice Chairperson. Mimi Hollister was voted in as Secretary.

The next agenda item was discussion of existing goals of the FHC.

One of the main goals is to educate the board and the community on affordable housing. What is it? What would that look like in Marblehead? Where can people turn to get more information. Who is eligible and what assistance is available for those seeking affordable housing? Updating the FHC website is critical for providing general and timely information. Public forums and listening sessions are other avenues for community education. Reaching out to other communities to learn what they are doing could also be very helpful. Teri mentioned that Harbor Homes (formerly Harborlight) has a series of educational videos on affordable housing available.

Another goal would be to sort out the responsibilities of and relationship between the Fair Housing Committee, Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee (HPPIC) and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF). (The last meeting of the HPPIC was October 28, 2021. Their next meeting is January 31<sup>st</sup>. The AHTF has yet to meet.)

Thatcher mentioned that housing is a priority in the Healy administration and given the State's strong financial position there will likely be significant funds available to build housing across the state.

For this reason, staying on top of housing grants and other funding sources is critical. Teri mentioned that the North Shore Housing Consortium has a significant amount of ARPA funding available for the creation of affordable housing. However, with the specific criteria and timelines that come with many of these grants, the town must be ready with projects and proposals to take advantage of these opportunities as they come along.

There was discussion of the Coffin School property and its availability for development for affordable housing. (This project was one of the main recommendations of the Housing Production Plan.) The School Department would have to declare the Coffin School surplus property before turning it over to the town, which they tabled for this year's town warrant and hopefully will happen next year. In the meantime, the next step would be to develop an RFI (Request for Information) from developers for their ideas as to how they would develop affordable housing at that location. An RFP (Request for Proposal) would follow the RFI in preparation for moving quickly on this property when/if it becomes available, likely 2024. In the mean time, the focus is on the 40R property soon to be developed at Vinnin Square with 11 units of affordable rentals and the 40B Sailmaker Place Condominiums that will have 12 affordable units.

The Planning Board is working on a Warrant Article for this year's Town Meeting about permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU'S) by right in hopes of creating more affordable housing.

The bike park at the corner of Beacon Street and West Shore Drive, and the Eveleth School are both possibilities for affordable housing in the distant future.

Public Comment: Renee Keaney informed the committee that the Marblehead Democratic Town Committee will be having a forum on affordable housing on March 27<sup>th</sup>. She was asking for recommendations/volunteers from the FHC for panelists to participate in the forum. Becky, Teri and Cathy Hoog from the Salem Housing Authority were suggested panelists.