



OBSERVER REPORT

FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE (FHC) – April 25, 2022 at the Jacobi Community Center and via Zoom LWVM Observer – Bonnie Grenier

Members Present -Debra Larkin, Mimi Hollister, Teri McDonough, Joseph Whipple, Katie Farrell, Frank Evans, Bob Neuss

Bob Neuss was welcomed as the newest member of the Fair Housing Committee.

CHAPA (Citizens' Housing and Planning Association) will be hosting three educational events in the next several weeks:

- April 28 – CHAPA Annual Fair Housing Symposium: Expanding Choice Through Local Fair Housing
- May 3 – CHAPA's Annual Federal Affordable Housing Policy Forum
- May 3 – Policy Leadership Council Meeting

June 16th is the tentative date for a focus group hosted by the FHC to discuss ADUs (Additional Dwelling Units). This meeting is in preparation for the Planning Board's public meeting on the matter. In anticipation of the meeting, Becky Curran Cutting, Town Planner, has asked FHC members to reach out to designated communities to gather information about ADUs in their communities:

- How many ADUs have been permitted in the last three years
- How many ADUs have been permitted town/city wide
- How many ADU applications have been rejected in the last five years and for what reason.
- What are the challenges of enforcing regulations around ADUs?
- Are you contemplating changes in ADU laws or ordinances?

Mimi reported on some research she had done on ADUs:

- She found that ADUs are not generally popular for a variety of reasons. Some feel they will devalue neighboring properties.
- Most towns that have an ADU ordinance or by-law have put many restrictions in place, mainly that an ADU can only be rented to family members, as well as lot size requirements.
- ADUs tend to have lower rents than regular apartments in the community.
- 37 towns have a restricted ADU by-law and over the years an average of 2.5 per year are ever built in the whole state.
- About 37 towns have regulations regarding ADUs but restrictions tend to discourage their development.
- There needs to be community education to dispel fears about ADUs

Katie Farrell received a letter from neighbors of the proposed bike park which is the subject of Article 33 on the town warrant. They state that only 20% of the land will be used for the park. Only dead trees will be removed along with some invasive plants. All natural building materials will be used in construction of ramps and other features in the park. This is an all-volunteer undertaking and the understanding is that use as a bike park will continue only until the town needs the land for other purposes. Katie suggested that the FHC endorse the Article and speak to that effect at Town Meeting as a chance to put forth the recommended idea that affordable housing will go there when it becomes feasible.

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board will probably not meet until after Town Meeting.

HPP Implementation Committee hasn't had any recent meetings. Teri met with Becky Cutting to discuss three community engagement strategies:

- Housing counseling will continue to be offered at the Marblehead Counseling Center. New case manager, Lisa Blumberg, has joined and may be able to assist with Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) through North Shore Home Consortium.
- Harbor Light will hold a "Housing University" training for members of the MCC, Board of Selectmen, and other town groups
- New census figures will be out and will allow the FHC to update their website to be more interactive and user friendly

There was general discussion of the MBTA Communities legislation which seeks to address the need for multi-family housing in the state, and along MBTA transportation routes. There seems to be a lot of push-back from the affected communities over concerns as to how this would affect the need for additional police, schools, and other services that would put a financial strain on them. Marblehead would be targeted for 1793 new units, which committee members feel is unrealistic.