



## OBSERVER REPORT

### **HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

September 25, 2023 Hybrid Meeting Recorded

LWVM Observer – Bonnie Grenier

Members in Attendance: Erin Noonan, Thatcher Keezer, Becky Curran Cutting, Kurt James, Dirk Isbrandsten, Louis Meyi, and Michelle Cresta.

Erin announced that Barton Hyte will be stepping down from the HPPIC. The Planning Board will choose someone from that board to replace him.

Becky reviewed the MBTA Multi Family Zoning Requirements presentation made to the Planning Board earlier in September to include the following:

- The law requires that MBTA Communities must zone for “at least” one district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as a “matter of right” at a minimum of 15 units per acre.
- The town has the ability to choose the locations, set dimensional controls (lot size, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.) provide design guidelines, parking requirements, and more.
- Legalizing multi-family housing by right will create more housing opportunities for families, older adults, young couples, and our local work force.
- There is no requirement for an affordable housing component, but some communities are building that into their requirements with varying percentages of affordable units.
- In Marblehead, the district can be located anywhere within the town and must be at least 27 acres (which represents just 0.2% of the total land area),
- The law is NOT a production mandate.
- The town needs to be in compliance with the law by December 31, 2024, which means that proposed zoning changes must be voted on at Town Meeting in May, 2024.
- Marblehead does have a zoning district of sufficient size that allows multi-family housing by special permit, not “by right” and so at this time the town is not in compliance with the requirements. An analysis by the Mass Housing Partnership (MHP) found that with some changes, it could be in compliance.
- Communities that don’t comply will not be eligible for funds from 15 different discretionary grant programs and may be subject to civil enforcement action or liability under federal and state fair housing laws.
- Community engagement is critical to the success of this undertaking. Methods to engage citizens include open public meetings/hearings, educational panels/forums/webinars, visioning sessions, tabling at community events, focus groups and surveys.

Since the town already has a Smart Growth overlay district bylaw, perhaps that district can be enlarged and the bylaw amended to conform with the MBTA requirements which include a minimum of 27 acres town-wide with no area being less than 5 acres with a minimum density of 15 units per acre. Any development under 40R Smart Growth could bring significant dollars into town from the state because it would include an affordable component. There was discussion around the HPPIC communicating with the Planning Board to emphasize to them that this new zoning requirement is an opportunity to create more affordable housing.

A consultant from CHAPA (Citizen's Housing & Planning Association) has been enlisted to help develop a community engagement strategy. It was suggested that a 40R consultant would be helpful to the town as they develop the new zoning regulations. but the Town Planner feels we can use the 40R maps and information that the Town already went through with a consultant.

Cathy Hoog from the Salem/Marblehead Housing Authorities was not in attendance so Erin gave an update on the Broughton Road property. Cathy met with people from the Mass. Housing Partnership who took a tour of the property. Since they are not in the cycle to get grant money for a feasibility study, Mass. Housing suggested that the Housing Authority go ahead with an RFP for the property since it has so much potential. There is a great deal of state money available for public housing.

Coffin School Update: School Committee (SC) members seem to have differing opinions as to what to do with the property although this has not been a topic of discussion at a full SC meeting. Some on SC want to explore if the property might still have educational value going forward, in which case they would hold on to it. In the meantime, the building continues to deteriorate. This generated some discussion as to whether or not to have the building torn down. Apparently, because of the age of the building, keeping it would generate federal and state tax historic tax credits for the developer. Neighbors have expressed an interest in keeping the building.

If the SC decides to turn the Coffin School over to the town, it would be best to know ASAP in order to send out requests for information. Either way, the SC would have to decide by late December/early January in order to get the proposal on the town warrant for Town Meeting in May. The HPPIC sees the Coffin School as a good opportunity to develop affordable housing on the site.