

Dracut Housing Authority and Dracut Selectmen
Housing Sub-Committee Meeting

July 28, 2014
6:00 P.M.

Present: Joe DiRocco, Tami Dristillaris, Jesse Forcier, Mary Karabatsos

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The Director stated that this is a meeting of the new Housing Sub-Committee. Jesse Forcier asked for this meeting to get the new members up to speed on construction of affordable housing in Dracut.

The Director informed the Board on the prior discussions that took place. She also handed our minutes of prior meetings.

The Director stated that at the last meeting the Committee had requested her to find out if it would be possible to put a two story building on the Lakeview Avenue site. The Committee wanted to know if it would be possible to put a building on the site by using the landscape to access both floors. This would eliminate the cost of an elevator. The Director stated that she spoke with GCG Engineers who had conducted the previous site feasibility study and he had said that would be possible. Unfortunately, we do not have funding to request the engineer to do additional work on the site.

The Director also stated that at the Dracut Housing Authority Commissioner's meeting in June it was decided to hold off on pursuing elderly housing for the near future. The Director gave the Committee a copy of the site feasibility study that was performed on the Lakeview Avenue site back in 2011. At the March 24th sub-committee meeting the discussion focused on revisiting building on the Lakeview Avenue site.

The sub-committee also received a financial feasibility study that was conducted on the Richardson Property. There were four options on this study, one for the construction of 13 units, 24 units, 45 units, and 60 units. All with various funding options, as well as, what entity would control the project after completion. The housing authority members were not comfortable with someone else managing the property. At the last few meetings we talked about building 13 units at either the Richardson Property or the Lakeview Avenue site. This would allow for the housing authority to keep total control and management of the housing. If the housing authority wants to keep control of the project then we would need to acquire \$3 million from CPC and then secure a \$1 million dollar loan. This scenario would allow us to have total control with either 13 units on Richardson or Lakeview. This would also allow us to take 13 low income applicants from out list.

Ms. Dristillaris inquired why we are not pursuing housing on the Richardson property. The Director informed Ms. Dristillaris that the housing authority board was not in total agreement to pursue housing (at this time) on the Richardson Property. The Director stated that we are meeting today to discuss options. Ms. Dristillaris asked did they know this when the taxpayers purchased the land that they would not be moving to construct affordable housing on the site. The Director stated that the funding climate has changed over the last four years and when the financial feasibility study was conducted we

found out that in order to get funding we would have to give up control. Some members of the sub-committee wanted to move forward quicker to build senior housing and they thought that it could be done quicker on the Lakeview Avenue Site. Mr. DiRocco stated that if we were to build more units on the Richardson site it would take at least five or six years. Mr. Forcier asked if the CPC funded the first feasibility study on Lakeview Avenue and the Director stated that they did at a cost of \$5,000. Mr. Forcier stated that we would have to access additional funds in order to have an updated feasibility study performed on the Lakeview Avenue site. The Director informed the sub-committee that the housing authority is not allowed to use any of their funds on these projects. Mr. DiRocco stated that the Lakeview Avenue site has been deeded back to the Town. Ms. Dristillaris asked if the Richardson Property has the site issues that Lakeview Avenue has (asbestos and ledge). The Director stated that they both have site issues. The Richardson property has road issues and wetland crossing issues.

Mr. Forcier stated that he asked for this meeting to discuss options and where we go from here. He also stated that ledge is not necessarily a big issue. That was one of the reasons Phil Thibault had suggested that we utilize the site to construct the building. Mr. Forcier inquired if the Lakeview Avenue property could be deeded back to the housing authority. Mr. DiRocco stated that he could bring this back to the Board of Selectmen and find out if they would do this. Mr. DiRocco stated that he would put this on the agenda for the next Selectmen meeting. Ms. Dristillaris stated that she is interested in building on the Richardson Property; she stated that we have control of the site and we should build there. Ms. Dristillaris also believes that we should move forward now. Mr. DiRocco stated that he does not agree with Ms. Dristillaris because the land on Richardson does not go away. The housing authority will still own it and can build down the road. Ms. Dristillaris thinks that we should start doing something now. Ms. Dristillaris asked if it had to be a combination of residents and not just seniors. It was explained that the scenarios address those concerns and the only way that we can put just seniors on the site would be to build the 13 unit scenario with CPC funds and a mortgage. This scenario could be used at both sites. Ms. Dristillaris asked if Veterans would have a priority. The Director stated that they would.

Mr. Forcier stated that he would like to review the material and get a better understanding of the scenarios. He would also like to have a sub-committee meeting when Debbie Ahern is available. In the meantime, Mr. DiRocco would bring this to the Selectmen. Ms. Dristillaris asked if the Bridge Street property was ready to be built on. The Director stated that additional studies would have to be done on the site and there would also have to be updated studies performed. Ms. Dristillaris asked why we purchased the Richardson Property if we are not planning on building on it. Mr. Forcier stated that at the time he was on the CPC Board and the plan was to build on it. Since that time, the funding has changed. We were initially looking at a 202 HUD program that no longer exists. The Director stated that the Housing Authority Board voted against it. Ms. Dristillaris asked Mr. DiRocco that when the Town purchased the Richardson Property for \$900,000 was he in favor of it. Mr. DiRocco stated that he was but the funding climate has changed and we are not going to get this money any time soon. He stated that if we build on the Lakeview Avenue site now, we will be getting elderly housing within a few years.

Mr. Forcier stated that he would like Mr. DiRocco to bring the Lakeview Avenue site to his Board and they would have to vote to deed the property to the housing authority. The Housing Authority Board would then need to accept the Lakeview Avenue property.

A housing sub-committee meeting will be scheduled.

Adjourned.