Minutes

Affordable Housing Committee Meeting

South Portland Planning & Development
496 Ocean Street
Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Attendees
Mike Hulsey
Kara Auclair
Brent Wilson
Tyler Kinney
Marie Pineo
Justin Barker
Joshua Reny

Absent:
Isaac Misiuk
Mike Duvernay
Sandy Warren

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:12 pm

2. Adopt minutes of February 26, 2019 – Motion by Kara and seconded by Brent. No discussion, all in favor.

3. Review of zoning incentives ordinance draft – Justin mentioned that this more of a comprehensive ordinance that aims to meet several goals of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. There is an affordable housing component, which is why this committee needs to be involved. The ordinance includes an overlay zoning district that can be applied to certain properties. They are divided into 3 tiers that have different levels of development incentives and requirements to get those incentives. The incentives are mostly parking reductions and density and height increases.

   The requirements are transportation improvements, design standards, and affordable housing. There were questions about how the incentives can stack and how the point system for requirements works. Kara suggested she would like to see the workforce housing income level be lower. Brent noted that even at 60% AMI, is within what much of the workforce makes. The committee decided it may be better to only have two levels of income for affordability at <60% AMI and 60-80% AMI. The committee questioned whether 3 tiers of development was necessary. Justin said he would look into which areas were within each tier and see if it was possible to combine into two tiers. Kara suggested that access to the potential housing trust fund or fee rebates could be a compelling incentive. The rest of the committee agreed. The committee asked clarification on how fractional unit requirements are handled. Justin noted that any fraction of a unit rounds up to a full unit. Josh suggested the same should be done for parking if it doesn’t already.
Justin asked whether it would be better to require affordability for a certain time-period or in perpetuity, and who would certify that affordability is being maintained. Mike suggested that for-sale properties would just be a deed restriction that is carried with each sale transaction, and the rentals would most likely be developers such as Avesta, but could be handled by a third-party. Justin suggested the deed restriction should include some language requiring City approval to remove from the property. Josh clarified that we may want to allow some flexibility in the deed restriction language to modify or remove it in the future.

Mike asked when this would go before Council. Justin said it isn’t really at that stage and needs to be vetted through other committees before we can a good sense of what we are truly proposing. It may be eluded to at the May workshop as partial justification to extend this committee, but would not be presented as a draft. If this committee is extended, it will likely come back here again before it goes up to Council.

4. Discuss draft committee purpose, duties, etc. – A draft code section for a standing affordable housing committee was discussed. Josh suggested a few edits to the composition and appointments. Mike suggested appointment could just be rotating among Councilors, and not district specific. Kara asked why market-rate housing was included in the duties section. Justin said it tied into a larger goal of increasing housing stock, but makes sense to not include that for this committee specifically. Justin also mentioned an education piece should be added to the duties section in response to previous suggestions from this committee. Kara asked if this document could be used at the workshop. Josh and Justin thought that shouldn’t be an issue.

5. Round Table
   a. Josh – The City recently met with a potential affordable housing developer. He is still very early in the process and has due diligence, but it is exciting nevertheless. Avesta is already planning for Phase II of the Westbrook Street project.
   b. Brent – Westbrook Housing is hiring for an experience property manager if anyone knows of someone who might be qualified.
   c. Mike H. – Rep. Kessler of South Portland has introduced a bill to increase notification time periods for rent increases and terminations of tenancies at will. The South Portland Housing Authority may comment on this.
   d. Kara – Had a conversation with a community member at Redbank about how difficult it can be to afford living costs after initial financial assistance runs out. There should be more education about what resources are available.
   e. Marie – Has had similar conversations with people. Wants to bring them to a Council workshop to show them how they can be heard in local government. Josh suggested that Council sometimes holds meetings in different locations around town.
   f. Justin – There are a couple bills in the legislature related to affordable housing. Will send the committee the bill text and notice if there are any scheduled public hearings on them.

6. Next meeting is scheduled for 5:00 PM on April 25, 2019. Josh suggested spending time at the next meeting to discuss strategy for the May 14 Council workshop.

7. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm