

LCI Board Meeting Minutes
February 24, 2021 (Via Zoom)

PRESENT: Seth Poole, Hon. Delphin Clyburn, Patricia Brett, Neil Currie, Arlevia Samuel (Acting Executive Director), Evan Trachten (staff)

Absent: Hon. Ernie Santiago, Timothy Yolen

Meeting called to order at 6:02 P.M.

Evan Trachten informed the Board that we are welcoming Nadine Horton to LCI Board as a new member. The Board welcomed Nadine.

Review of LCI Board meeting minutes from February 1, 2021 Special Meeting. A motion to approve was made by Alder Clyburn, Seconded by Pat Brett, approved unanimously

New Business

Amendment for 53 Shelton Avenue

Evan told the Board that the City proposes to amend the approval of Believe In Me Empowerment Corporation to change the use from Single Room Occupancy (SRO) to apartments (efficiency and 1 bedroom). The applicant will develop the site with 2 structures. The project will be built in 2 phases and we will allow two years for each phase to be built. Evan told the Board that after this LDA was approved at the Board of Alders a conversation continued, which is what brought about changing the use. The Alder is in support of this change and there is a letter of support in the file.

Mr. Walker addressed the Board. He told the Board that several longtime residents reached out to discuss the project and proposed changes. The Alder agrees with the modification. This change will allow him to continue to serve his clients as well as the community as a good neighbor. Clients in his program have asked him to develop this type of housing so they can stay under his wing. People will now be able to transition from SRO to a private 1 bedroom. His program helps people to increase their income. His clients desire this private space.

Mr. William Doolan who lives at 427 Dixwell Avenue provided testimony to the Board. He said he lives at Mr. Walkers building and Mr. Walker's place makes him feel safe. Mr. Walker makes sure only good people live on-site. He has been there for 3 ½ years and he has learned a lot from Mr. Walker. This type of housing is needed. He would like to have a 1 Bedroom. He has been unable to rent a unit because of credit issues. He has the finances for a apartment but keeps getting denied when he applies.

Nadine Horton told the Board she works at Yale School of Medicine and she is familiar with Believe In Me and Mr. Walkers work. Nadine works with this population. Nadine asked about how clients pay, weekly or monthly? Mr. Walker told the Board he is flexible and works with his clients to accommodate them. Are services be offered to the occupants, if so on site? Mr. Walker told the Board services will be offered to the

occupants, but it is a short walk to the Dixwell Avenue site to receive the services. Seth asked about utilities, heat, electric systems. Mr. Walker will pay for those costs for “efficiency style” units. The final design must be a stack and not horizontal. He is trying to configure the units to pay for this through the agency. Some clients are unable to afford utilities due to being on very limited budgets such as SSI.

Neil asked about the 80% AMI, will his occupants be above the 80% AMI in a year or two after receiving services from his program? Mr. Walker hopes so! Neal asked if he would require them to move out if they were above the 80% AMI. Mr. Walker will allow people to stay. Clients do move on to other housing as they do better financially.

Evan clarified that the City makes affordability a 20 year term (unless additional funding is provided that lengthens the affordability period) it is not automatically in perpetuity.

Alder Clyburn made a motion to approve the item, seconded by Nadine Horton, Approved unanimously

Seth thanked Mr. Walker for his work and it was in the spirit of the Q House. Mr. Walker would like to continue to be a good pillar in the community and a partner with the City of New Haven. Mr. Walker thanked the Board.

Discussion

Evan reviewed the Disposition Guidelines with the Board. Evan read through the terms. Board members asked about the definition of CD eligible. Evan told the Board there are eligible census tracts that can receive CDBG funds. The Guidelines create rules to sell property. Property can come through the PAD Process (PAD Committee, City Plan Commission, LCI Board, and Board of Alders) or by Communication. The City currently does not have much inventory (structures) because we acquire property via foreclosure. We have not acquired much in the last few years.

Going through terms a question was asked about the RFP process. Alder Clyburn asked about the internal “select committee”. Evan told the Board no Alders are on the committee it’s internal (LCI, Economic Development, City Plan) and the PAD Process is where the review takes place after the City has selected a respondent. Neil ask if there is oversight on the selection process at the level of the PAD Committee, City Plan, LCI Board? Evan told the Board it is solely internal.

Neil told the Board it would be good to have oversight built into the process to avoid favoritism. Neil praised City staff and expressed confidence in the process. Evan is aware of members of the community being on selection committees. The City has the right to hold an RFP and enter it into our process. Neil offered ideas such as sending the top two proposals to the PAD Committee. Pat wanted to make sure we note this specific concern was part of the board’s revisions to the Guidelines. Pat wanted to edit the document on the screen, but it was a pdf file type. Evan will compile a list of proposed changes and they will be noted in the minutes.

Neil told the Board reducing density should be removed as an LCI Objective it’s very 1997. Evan told the Board it is proposed to be eliminated in the current draft.

Evan told the Board there are two ways to get a property to the Board of Alders, through the PAD process or via Communication. Evan also discussed what happens when LCI does New Construction or rehabilitation and uses a realtor. These sales go straight to the Board of Alders. Neil asked how the realtor is selected, is there local preference or diversity? Arlevia told the board there is an RFP for professional services. Purchasing does the scoring of the RFP, extra points are given to New Haven firms. The firms are Kaerus and Taj Real Estate. Neil told the Board Kaerus is from East Haven.

Evan also shared information with the Board about LCI Bylaws "remote attendance". Corporation Counsel has drafted some language. The term "virtual attendance" is not the same as "remote attendance". Neil thought the entire meeting should be remote. Up to the entire meeting can be virtual. The meeting does not have a physical location. No longer having in-person meeting is the idea (only Evan in a room by himself with the public Neil joked). Seth noted that teachers are operating in this manner. If the Board wants to do this staff will ask Corp Counsel. Add language for "remote and in-person is permitted (both)". Nadine expressed that it was very helpful to attend remotely and allows easy access and attendance. If someone is not totally available to attend, they can still have a meeting playing while they deal with other matters. Pat likes both options, in person and remote. Seth mentioned witnessing the benefit of remote attendance during a recent Zoning matter where many people testified. Evan told the Board the City of New Haven will have to provide equipment and access if these changes occur and we go back to normal operations. This would create some new challenges for staff. Seth mentioned utilizing some funds from the LCI budget to create this 21st century room with the ability to host meetings in an efficient way. Things are changing and Seth is happy to see changes.

Neil talked about what the Civilian Review Board (CRB) is doing for transparency (posting bi-laws publicly, posting everyone's conflict of interest disclosure form [with some redactions], posting recordings of the meetings for public review, live stream on Youtube and facebook, email Notices to all CMT Chairs). Perhaps we should consider or adopt some of their reforms. Nadine told the Board she sat in on that CRB meeting via remote attendance and this highlights how important that access and technology can be to allow residents to access meetings while doing other things. Nadine said that not all of the items Neil mentioned are currently implemented, Zoom meeting are open to the public, and public statements are permitted via Zoom (they are debating Youtube live). The Public can see and hear everything going on right now. Neil said they were good ideas for any Board, in any city.

Alder Clyburn told the Board where we are going with these changes is good. The updating is good with checks and balances. They just landed on Mars so we need to move up too.

Alder Clyburn made a motion to adjourn, Seconded by Nadine Norton, All were in favor, Approved unanimously.

Adjourned at 7:11 P.M.