



TOWN OF FRAMINGHAM MASSACHUSETTS

HOUSING POLICY LIAISON COMMITTEE

MEMORIAL BUILDING
150 CONCORD STREET • ROOM B-2
FRAMINGHAM, MA 01702
TELEPHONE [508] 620-4852 • FAX [508] 820-9645

STAFF LIAISON: EUGENE KENNEDY, SR. PLANNER
EMAIL: EFK@FRAMINGHAMMA.GOV

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

KATHERINE E. MURPHY, BOARD OF SELECTMEN
A. GINGER ESTY, BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SUE BERNSTEIN, PLANNING BOARD
ANN WELLES, PLANNING BOARD

CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE Summary of September 28, 2005 Meeting

Attendees:

M. Cohen, R. Flax, S. Orr, C. Frary, L. Lee, L. Sheehan, S. Starr, J. Perry, K. Bartolini, B. Muto, L. Sheehan, J. Perry, C. Monzon, J. Callahan, K. Murphy, S. Bernstein, G. Esty, J. Barrett, J. Mello, G. Kennedy

1. Introduction by K. Murphy

2. Roundtable Discussion – Government Services and Government Responsibility

- A series of questions regarding government services and responsibility were discussed. (See list of questions at the end of this summary.)
- Education is a town service that is affected by housing. Single family homes tend to have more school age children than other housing types. Although it was noted that that may not be as true today as it has been in the past. Framingham school data was provided: 8400 students at a cost of approximately \$9800 per student. The School Committee is doing a School Benchmark Study that will be provided to the CAC. The initial results indicate that school age population of students will tend to level off over the upcoming years and that Framingham has lost 1700 population since 2000.
- The American Communities Survey for Framingham will be released in August 2006.
- There was some discussion concerning rental vs. homeowner households and the level of school services required by each. Also discussed was the likelihood that police and fire services would be affected to a different degree by each type of household – single, two, or multi family uses.
- More apartments with handicapped accessibility is a government responsibility.
- There are recreational/cultural costs associated with providing housing.
- Roadway and water/sewer infrastructure are services affected by housing. Each new project imposes a burden on existing infrastructure. What needs to be avoided is a trigger event whereby a project requires a major, costly upgrade to existing infrastructure. A DPW estimate of 200 million to upgrade infrastructure was presented.

- CDBG Program currently provides housing rehabilitation assistance (up to 33-50% of the program total) with 48 units rehabilitated since 2003. Framingham will also be receiving \$350,000 in HOME program funds beginning next fiscal year.
- Chapter 40R is an example of a state program that could provide additional financial assistance to communities but the trade-off in loss of local autonomy in zoning decisions is a draw back.
- Government responsibility is to maximize property values.
- More affordable housing with clustering to preserve open space is a desirable government goal.
- Rehabilitation of existing older buildings into housing is a wish list item. Tax incentives to help preserve these building should be considered. Identify these locations through zoning.
- Government should be fair and equitable. Rehabilitation is good provided it does not detract from existing neighborhoods. Restoring the beauty of the existing housing is stock is important. We need to find a way to maintain the 10 percent affordable housing that we presently have so we can control the siting of new affordable housing projects. Zoning must be used to the best interest of current homeowners and a “no growth” strategy may be good. “Stagnant” can be considered a good word when taken in the context of a limited or no growth strategy.
- Protection of neighborhood integrity is important. Each neighborhood should have a say in how it looks and how it gets developed. All neighborhoods do not have to look the same.
- Don’t let any one area bear the brunt of development. – diversify throughout town.
- Find ways to keep seniors in town.
- Framingham has done a good job with its zoning practices. We have adopted affordable housing, over 55 housing, cluster housing and have supported old mill building restoration. We already have more than 10 percent affordable although the state does not count these units. We should look into artists’ lofts and accessory apartment by laws next.
- Better code enforcement was identified as an important component to a housing policy. If staff levels need to be increased then they should in order to get better enforcement of existing codes and bylaws.
- Methods to encourage conversion of the large amount of rental housing in town to homeowner housing should be made part of the housing plan. Homeownership brings with it a sense of place that serves to upgrade and maintain neighborhoods.
- More creative zoning that results in walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with increased density if it puts town services to better use should be explored.

- Framingham should look into having a Redevelopment Authority that could focus on older mill buildings and brownfields sites. These are the best places to develop and maximize use of existing infrastructure.
- Absentee landlords should be dealt with more forcefully. Some area of town without water or sewer services should stay that way. Otherwise it becomes very expensive to bring services to these areas and the open space is lost. We need to restore brownfields and keep a balance with our limited manufacturing and manufacturing zoning areas.
- We should employ tax incentives to encourage people to restore multi family housing provided they live there.
- Expiring use is an issue that needs to be discussed. It is important that existing affordable units be preserved through expiring use agreements so that Framingham maintains our 10 percent compliance status.
- When asked which community Framingham was most similar to, Waltham was the generally agreed town. Others considered included Burlington, Quincy and Chicopee.

4. Questions Discussed at the Meeting

GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

- What's the responsibility of local government regarding housing?
- What are your top five concerns in planning housing?
- What would your wish list for housing be?
- What's the relationship between housing and open space?

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

- What town services do you see being affected by various housing types?
- What are the fiscal, environmental, and transportation implications?

5. Conclusion

- Next meeting will be on Thursday, October 20, 2005