

**NORTH SALEM TOWN HOUSING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

**April 15, 2015 6:30 p.m.
Delancey Hall**

Members Present: **Michael Palma**
 William Monti
 Anthony Navarro, Chairman

Others Present: **Kenneth Belfer, Senior Vice President Housing/Westhab**
 Marcus Lovell, Director Property Management/Westhab
 Janice Will, Secretary

Chairman Anthony Navarro opened the meeting and invited Kenneth Belfer of Westhab to speak.

MIH Apartment, 2 East Cross Street

Mr. Belfer stated that a tenant has recently vacated an apartment on the top floor of the building at 2 East Cross street; the apartment has not been readied for a new tenant yet. He explained that he reviewed the Zoning Ordinance chapter pertaining to housing and noted that it states that the Housing Board maintains a list of potential tenants.

Chairman Navarro said there is only a list for apartments at Bridleside which they maintain themselves. He added that Bridleside might be willing to share tenant information, but he did not know.

Mr. Belfer said he might call them. He told the Board that the County was interested in taking over existing rental units in northern Westchester to have them count as affordable/affirmative housing per the County settlement, but they may not take units/buildings that are already occupied. The house at 2 East Cross Street is also ineligible because there are deed restrictions that were placed on the building by the Town.

William Monti asked about the vacant apartment, and Mr. Belfer replied that it is a 2-bedroom unit on the second floor.

Mr. Belfer explained that, per County guidelines (60% of Westchester Area Median Income), maximum income for a 2-bedroom unit (family of 2-4 people) is from \$48,800 to \$62,220 per year.

Chairman Navarro asked if a couple with no children would be eligible, and Mr. Belfer said they would be.

The Chairman thought a family with children would be more appropriate.

Mr. Belfer pointed out that the Zoning Ordinance allows any family of 2 people to apply for one of the MIH units in Town, but Westhab prefers to approve a parent and child and not 2 adults.

Indicating the North Salem Eligibility Priority List, Mr. Belfer said he wanted to let the Housing Board know that granting priority points to heads of families 62/ older or 35/ younger is discriminatory. He explained that the law allows housing to be exclusively designated for senior citizens but does not permit specific ages getting preferential treatment, and Westhab was told by Westchester Residential Opportunities to take the age column out of their applications because it can be seen as discriminatory. Mr. Belfer said Westhab is also not permitted to consider the ages of applicants' children in determining tenant status. He stated that he would prefer not to use the age categories from the Eligibility Priority List.

Chairman Navarro asked if the categories re handicapped applicants would also be a problem.

Mr. Belfer said those would not be a problem; discrimination against handicapped applicants would be an issue but preferential treatment for them would not be. Mr. Belfer stated that he will raise the issue of age discrimination in the Ordinance with Supervisor Warren Lucas.

Returning to the specific subject of the vacant apartment, Mr. Belfer said the maximum rent permitted for a 2-bedroom apartment would be \$1441 per month, minus a utility allowance of \$32, equaling rent of \$1409. He added that \$1409 is only a maximum amount/there is flexibility to set the rent lower for applicants earning less than the maximum permitted annual income figure, because he can't charge more rent than an applicant can afford (County states that 30% of income is reasonable for housing costs).

The Chairman asked if Westhab will do the calculation for applicants for the apartment at 2 East Cross Street, and Mr. Belfer responded that they will, after checking applications against the North Salem point system.

Chairman Navarro asked when the rent for this particular apartment was last adjusted.

Mr. Belfer said it would normally be increased annually, and rents are also adjusted based on changes in income (up or down).

Mr. Monti asked if actual utility use is ever measured against the utility allowances.

Mr. Belfer admitted he finds the utility schedule somewhat unrealistic, but he is obligated to use it; actual utility costs are probably higher.

Mr. Monti wondered what Westhab's out-of-pocket expense would be, but Mr. Belfer explained that Westhab's utility costs are only for common areas/the tenants pay the apartment utility bills.

Mr. Monti commented that utility costs could put an apartment just out of reach for some applicants.

Mr. Belfer explained that that is why rents are set at a maximum of 30% of a tenant's income.

Mr. Belfer said the apartment should be ready to show some time in May. He stated that that the County will advertise broadly and asked what the Town's time line is. He said he could run an ad for 30 days if required to do so.

Chairman Navarro thought the ad should go on the Town website; the secretary mentioned the North Salem Daily Voice; Mr. Monti suggested church bulletins.

The secretary said neither the Ordinance nor the Rules and Regulations seem to state a specific length of time for advertising.

Mr. Belfer suggested he might run some free ads/announcements more broadly and some for shorter periods.

The Chairman noted that the Rules & Regulations calls for allowing applicants 30 days to respond to the ad.

Mike Palma thought 30 days would be long enough to advertise, but Chairman Navarro thought Mr. Belfer would prefer to run the ad for a shorter period of time/get a tenant in sooner.

Mr. Palma said it seemed as though if the ad runs for 15 days and no applications are requested/turned in, the ad would keep running.

Chairman Navarro asked how many applications Mr. Belfer would be comfortable with.

Mr. Belfer said if he gets one, he will look at it for eligibility and let the Housing Board know about it.

Mr. Palma asked how much time Mr. Belfer has found necessary to get enough applications.

Mr. Belfer remembered having difficulty getting applications at all for a 1-bedroom apartment in the past.

Mr. Palma noted that applicants have 30 days from the ad date to submit applications, so Mr. Belfer would have to wait 30 days before ranking applications or recommending one. He pointed out that this does not mean the ad must be run for 30 days.

Mr. Belfer said he will run the ad for 30 days if that is what the Housing Board wants.

The Chairman stated that if the ad runs on May 1, Mr. Belfer must give people until May 30 to turn in applications.

Mr. Palma added that if the ad runs for 10 days, people must be given 30 days from the last (10th) day the ad runs.

Mr. Belfer said he might run the ad for a week and state in it that people have 30 days to respond.

Mr. Belfer asked if the Board would vote to approve the rent and the means by which it was established.

To approve that the rent for the 2-bedroom 2nd floor apartment at 2 East Cross Street be set at a maximum of \$1441/month, minus a utility allowance of \$32/month, based on applicants' having a maximum of 60% of Westchester County's 2014 Area Median Income.

Motion by: Anthony Navarro

Seconded by: Michael Palma

All in favor.

Mr. Belfer said he will provide a copy of the ad and a flyer for posting.

Mr. Palma remarked that if the flyer is ready before April 30, the Housing Board could put copies in the Tax Receiver's Office.

The Chairman asked if Westhab uses a general fund for repairs/improvements or if the rents taken in are supposed to cover those things.

Mr. Belfer said that in the instance of 2 East Cross Street, Westhab Inc. owns the property (other properties are owned by separate corporations), so they have some leeway to use funds as they like. He said break-even is most desirable, but in the long run, 2 East Cross Street has probably cost Westhab money.

Messrs. Belfer and Lovell thanked the Board for their time and left the meeting.

MIH Property in Salem Chase to be made available for sale.

Chairman Navarro read letters from the owners of 5 Cider Mill Lane stating their desire to sell their property.

The secretary provided copies of the calculations she performed per the Code to arrive at maximum-permitted income and the maximum sale price for the subject property:

2015 figures = \$113,170 maximum annual income and \$282,925 maximum price

2015 avg. full-time town employee	\$66,570.51	
Factor for 3-bedroom unit	<u>x 1.7</u>	
Maximum income for 3-bed	113,169.867 =	\$113,170
Factor for max. price	<u>x 2.5</u>	
Maximum sale price 3-bed/2015	282,924.6675 =	\$282,925

The Housing Board agreed that they would not ask the Town Board to approve an application fee.

The secretary had also verified the 2015 taxes (\$7915 w/o STAR) and homeowners association 2015 monthly fee (\$280).

The secretary asked the Board how many times they want the Public Notice to run in the Journal News.

It was agreed to run the ad once initially.

The secretary handed out copies of a bulletin to be placed around Town.

Chairman Navarro recalled that the last time one of the MIH units in Salem Chase sold, the buyer had a very difficult time getting financing.

The secretary said she spoke to Norma Drummond at the County, and Ms. Drummond said the Housing Action Council has ties to some banks that are amenable to mortgages for Affordable and MIH housing/they will be able to help the purchaser of 5 Cider Mill Lane.

It was agreed that the Board should make a site inspection of the subject property before announcing its availability for purchase. The THB would like to do the inspection on a weeknight at about 6 pm (not Thursday).

The secretary gave the Chairman a letter to the property-owners for him to sign; the letter states the maximum permitted sale price and asks the owners to sign and return it to indicate their agreement.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Janice Will, Recording Secretary