

Engine 6 Community Meeting
June 20, 2013
Waban Community Library

Questions

Tenant Selection and Public Safety

1. Is there a way to check if someone has committed a sexual offense out of state? Can police initiate a "Triple I" check?

The Newton Police Department has volunteered to work with Metro West CD and Pine Street Inn to perform "Triple I" background checks on the prospective residents. Triple I stands for Interstate Identification Index and would allow us to get more information about out of state crimes, including sex offenses.

2. Why this location? Should chronically homeless individuals, as defined by HUD, be housed in this neighborhood? Waban is a walking suburban community, why has PSI selected this community? Has PSI thought about comfort level of residents in the Waban community? Not accessible, not accepted.

There are a number of reasons why this location was selected. That Waban is a walking suburban community is part of the reason that Metro West CD and Pine Street believe this is an appropriate site for supportive permanent housing for formerly homeless individuals. Not all people who have been homeless prefer to live in urban areas, and this site offers suburban amenities, such as open space, trees and relative quiet, while also offering access to the Green Line, the MWRTA bus route to Wellesley, Natick and Framingham and a peaceful walk to Waban Village and Newton Lower Falls/Wellesley.

While some persons have raised concerns about the lack of public transportation for residents of Engine 6, there are many opportunities for accessing grocery stores, pharmacies, the library, the post office, or even just a cup of coffee. The Green Line is also an excellent means of transportation into Boston. Assuming that a number of residents of Engine 6 will have existing relationships with care providers in Boston, the D Line provides easy access to those providers. As stated elsewhere, many Pine Street Inn/Paul Sullivan Housing residents in various Boston neighborhoods are equally dependent on public transportation to access all of the above.

Newton is a community abounding in social services. Newton-Wellesley Hospital and other primary health care, employment and vocational services, food pantries, elder services, Alcoholics Anonymous, veterans services, and mental health services are all represented in Newton. Residents of Engine 6 requesting these services will have a variety of options to choose from.

Newton is a member of the Brookline Newton Waltham Watertown Continuum of Care which coordinates HUD funding for homelessness in these four communities. Pine Street Inn has 95 units of housing in Brookline. Pine Street Inn also has 13 units of housing in Waltham.

Received by staff: June 25, 2013

Many developments Pine Street Inn have proposed have been met with legitimate fears by neighbors. However, in almost every case, the residents end up blending into the community and there are no real issues.

3. Does disability include serious mental health illness or drug addiction?

Disability, as defined by HUD with regard to chronically homeless, does include serious mental health illness and drug addiction. However, disability also includes many less serious mental health issues, as well as physical disabilities and many others. Any potential resident with serious, ongoing mental health issues or any current drug or alcohol addictions would be screened out.

4. What is "street level homelessness," "disenfranchised?"

"Street level homeless" simply means that people spend much of their time on the street while homeless. They may be in a shelter at night but may spend significant time out on the street. When we use "disenfranchised," we are not referring to the strict definition of the word, but rather to the lack of connection with the broader community when someone is homeless. Homeless individuals can feel cut off and marginalized. One of the best results of providing people with permanent housing is that they become reconnected in numerous ways, something which is greatly beneficial to one's self esteem and wellbeing.

5. Could there be a community advisory board made up of professionals in the field?

This is not possible in tenant selection because of confidentiality.

6. How will residents occupy their time throughout the day? What safeguards are there to insure residents do not cause a public (nuisance?) if not employed or otherwise occupied?

Each individual is different. Some persons will work full or part time. Others will be involved in job training or furthering their education. Others may volunteer in community activities. Some will spend time in their studio apartments. Others will go out to shop at a grocery store, pharmacy, etc. Others will go to appointments such as with a primary care provider. Others will go to the gym or library. Staff always encourage residents to take advantage of positive opportunities to be engaged and involved outside the residence. In addition to the tenant selection policies that screen out residents who would not be likely to succeed in permanent supportive housing, residents must abide by house rules and each tenant in every PSH residence must be accounted for at least once each day.

7. Why are police concerned about residents wandering around if there is no concern? There has been no impact study done, what is going to be the cost of extra police, etc.?

As expressed at the June 20 meeting, the Community Services Bureau Commander of the Newton Police Department is not concerned about this development proposal. Impact studies are not typically done for developments of this size.

8. Could PSI clarify staff coverage & overtime? What are the qualifications of short and long term staff? What kind of long term management requirements are in place for the program?

There would be one case manager, primarily on-site during normal business hours Monday through Friday. There would also be an on-site house manager. This person would be required to be on-site overnight, though not necessarily awake. Finally, there would be nine 8-hour shifts by counselors, who would be awake and providing coverage overnight and on weekends. We have also budgeted time to cover for vacation time, sick time and other paid leave, as well as overtime in the case of emergencies.

The case manager at Engine 6 will be required to have previous case management experience. Pine Street Inn also provides training to all direct care staff in such areas as motivational interviewing, CPR and First Aid, non-violent crisis intervention, teamwork and communication, relapse prevention, culturally competent service provision, and other relevant topics.

The property will be deed restricted due to public funding from both the City and the Commonwealth. In addition, through the 40B process, the Zoning Board of Appeals can put conditions on their approval of the Comprehensive Permit. Through these two vehicles, the City can legally require that the use and services remain consistent over time.

9. Is there anything being done to create buffer between the building and schools?

No.

10. Has PSI provided crime statistics for other developments?

Not yet.

11. Who bears responsibility if there is an incident with one of the residents?

Metro West CD and Pine Street Inn will do everything within their power to ensure that there are no incidents. This responsibility begins with our tenant selection process. Once residents are selected and move into their new apartments, they must abide by house rules. In addition, each tenant in every PSH residence must be accounted for at least once each day.

Relationship between Metro West CD and Pine Street Inn

12. Can another agency partner with Metro West?

Metro West CD spoke to other agencies about partnering to provide services to residents at Engine 6. We strongly believe that Pine Street Inn has the most experience and would provide the highest level of services to the proposed residents.

13. What happens if Metro West and PSI part ways? What happens if PSI can not fill beds & they decide to change use? What is protection?

The property will be deed restricted due to public funding from both the City and the Commonwealth. In addition, through the 40B process, the Zoning Board of Appeals can put conditions on their approval of the Comprehensive Permit. Through these two vehicles, the City can legally require that the use and services remain consistent over time.

Process

14. Can this issue be put on a referendum?

No.

15. Can comment period be delayed?

No.

16. If Mayor says “no” will City lose funds?

No. However, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires timely commitment and expenditure of a community’s federal community development and housing funds. Recently, Congress has criticized these federal programs because of the low expenditure rate nationwide, and has required communities to perform in a more timely fashion.

17. Why 40B instead of Dover Amendment?

The Dover Amendment only applies to the use of property, not the dimensional requirements of zoning. Therefore, either the Dover Amendment or 40B would require a public process. Metro West CD felt like 40B was a more appropriate path for this proposal and would allow for more opportunities for meaningful public participation. As of now, the 40B process has not begun and ZBA hearings will not occur until September 2013, at the earliest.

18. If communication is bad now, how will it be better later?

We are at the beginning of this process. As noted above, the zoning process has not even begun. Although the process so far has been difficult for all involved, some positive changes have come out of neighborhood concerns, including revised tenant selection policies. We look forward to continuing to work with residents to create the best possible permanent supportive housing at Engine 6 and to come up with a communication plan that meets the needs of the neighbors.

Financing

19. Does the property fit definition of “affordable housing?”

Although there are many definitions of “affordable housing,” this proposal meets all of them.

20. What about long term operating costs?

We believe the property will be able to cover its long term operating costs. We have also built in significant operating reserves and replacement reserves to make sure that we have a cushion in case our budget assumptions are incorrect, however, our operating budget has been reviewed by the Newton Housing Partnership and the state agencies and deemed appropriate and reasonable. In creating the budget, we looked at existing developments in both Metro West

Received by staff: June 25, 2013

CD and Pine Street Inn's portfolio, as well as publicly available information about other affordable housing developments in Newton.

21. Is this the best use of funds? Are CDBG funds going into project for 9 people the best bang for the buck?

The relative cost per unit is comparable, and less than in some instances, the average cost per unit from prior funded projects in Newton.

22. How much did property sell for?

The property has not sold but it is under agreement for \$900,000.