

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2021

ATTENDEES: Steve Irish, Chair; Nancy Chapman; Ruth Wagner and Maura Curran.

Additional Attendees: Shari Young, Admin

Public Attendees:

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm. This meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

Mr. Irish moved to accept the agenda, Ms. Wagner seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken and unanimously in favor.

Mr. Irish - yes

Ms. Chapman - yes

Ms. Wagner – yes

Ms. Curran - yes

MINUTES:

Mr. Irish moved to accept the meeting minutes for July 2021, Ms. Wagner seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken and unanimously in favor.

Mr. Irish - yes

Ms. Chapman - yes

Ms. Wagner – yes

Ms. Curran – did not vote, was not in attendance for the July 2021 meeting

Mr. Irish moved to accept the meeting minutes for August 2021, Ms. Curran seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken and was unanimously in favor.

Mr. Irish - yes

Ms. Chapman - yes

Ms. Curran – yes

Ms. Wagner – did not vote, was not in attendance for the August 2021 meeting

Mr. Irish moved to accept the meeting minutes for September 2021, Ms. Wagner seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken and unanimously in favor.

Mr. Irish - yes

Ms. Chapman - yes

Ms. Wagner – yes

Ms. Curran – did not vote, was not in attendance for the September 2021 meeting

DISCUSSION/UPDATE: 165-167 Stockbridge Letter to Planning Board

Mr. Irish indicated the letter written to the Planning Board regarding the proposed use of the land owned by the AHT on Stockbridge Road for the project at 7 New Driftway; supports the use of the Affordable Housing Trust land at 165-167 Stockbridge Road if the Planning Board approves of the proposed off-site affordable units for the project and if the Planning Board would allow for four units to be developed instead of two units.

There was discussion about rentals versus ownership; the AHT has not made a recommendation on that aspect at this time. If rentals it would involve a management company and may involve the AHT buying out the Developer. Ms. Chapman noted that at a prior meeting the Developer did say he was willing to maintain the buildings, but does not want to be responsible for rent collection.

Mr. Irish reiterated the AHT is supporting the use of the AHT land on Stockbridge Road, not necessarily supporting the Driftway project.

Ms. Wagner made a motion that the AHT approve the letter to be sent to the Planning Board, Ms. Chapman seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken and was unanimously in favor.

Mr. Irish - yes
Ms. Chapman - yes
Ms. Wagner – yes
Ms. Curran – yes

DISCUSSION/UPDATE: COVID Rental Assistance Letter to CPC

Ms. Wagner asked what had changed from the first letter to the revised letter. Mr. Irish explained that more explanation was added to the letter to provide the CPC with reasoning as to why the AHT has come to the decision to have the money rescinded that was approved for the COVID Rental Assistance Program. The AHT felt the current needs were being met by programs that were already in place through the CARES Act and other Federal programs; at this time there is no need for the Town program.

Ms. Curran made a motion that the AHT approve the letter to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) requesting to rescind the \$100,000 that was allocated to the AHT at Annual Town meeting 2021, Ms. Wagner seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken and unanimously in favor.

Mr. Irish - yes
Ms. Chapman - yes
Ms. Wagner – yes
Ms. Curran – yes

Mr. Irish thanked Ms. Chapman, Ms. Wagner and Ms. Guardia for all the work they did collecting information for the program.

DISCUSSION: Additional Funding Sources/Small Grants Repair Program

Ms. Chapman said that she is taking a Grant Writing course and as discussed at the last meeting she was hoping to write a Grant for the AHT Small Repairs Grant Program the AHT would like to establish. Unfortunately, she was not able to secure another funding source, so she is longer writing that Grant.

Ms. Chapman proposed going to Town Meeting for startup funds for the program; ask for \$25K - \$30K to allow the AHT to start up the program open it to all residents and give the AHT time to look for other funding sources, evaluate the program for 12 months and then determine if the AHT should go back to Town Meeting for additional funds to keep the program going if other funding sources have not been found.

Mr. Irish said the idea is to have some non-CPC funds; the funds the AHT has can only be used for deed restricted properties, affordable units that are in the Housing Production Plan (HPP). There was discussion about the AHT seeking funds from the general fund and the process of soliciting those funds, i.e. Select Board, Finance Director, etc.

Ms. Curran said it is beneficial to determine where the funds would come from before asking for anything at town meeting; that work should be done with Nancy Holt, Director of Finance, to determine where the money would come from. Ms. Curran said she could facilitate a meeting with Mr. Boudreau, Ms. Holt and members of the AHT to discuss options of funding to the AHT from the general town funds. Ms. Curran said there will be questions about what criteria will be required and they will be managed to ensure applicants are truly in need.

Ms. Chapman suggested she could do a DRAFT of the program before the next meeting to discuss as a group prior to meeting with Jim and Nancy.

There was discussion about the funds that the AHT has currently, all funds are from CPC so funds cannot be used for the "general public" for this program. However, the program could be started with current funds if it is only used to assist those in deed restricted properties.

Ms. Wagner suggested starting the program with the current funds for the deed restricted units and monitoring it for a year, seeing how it works and expanding it to the general public at a later date. Ms. Curran said it might be a good idea to wait and see how it works; generate the need and see if it exists before asking for the funds from the general fund. Ms. Wagner opined it is important for the AHT to keep the affordable units existing today in good condition. She provided an example where an affordable unit fell into the hands of the bank and there was concern that it was falling in disrepair; she said this would be a good method to keep all units in good repair and then take the next step as the AHT sees how the program works.

Ms. Chapman opined the two programs can run parallel to each other, the parameters would very much mirror each other with the exception of the deed restriction. She said the deed restricted units is a very small finite number, 20 units or so, she did not feel that group would be representative of the general population in Scituate that could use assistance. She said many towns in the surrounding area that have a small grants repair program gear the program to Senior Citizens or Disabled individuals, there are very few open to the "general" public. The point of the program is to provide a small amount of funds for people to fix immediate necessary repairs or modifications, i.e. a grab bar in a bathroom, something that would fall within \$2,500, electrical repairs from a roof leak. She did not feel it necessary to wait another year.

Ms. Curran asked if there is any way to understand how many people in town would qualify for a program. Ms. Chapman said she has spoken with the Town Social Worker who supports the program, the Outreach Coordinator at the Senior Center who thought there is a need and Kim Steward from Community Christmas who also supports the program. There is no way to determine the level of need at this time.

Ms. Chapman said if the program started with \$25,000 some of the money would have to be set aside to hire a part-time coordinator to receive the applications, vet them, award the money and keep track of the numbers, a small amount of money would be needed for marketing/outreach piece and the balance would be for the grant. The AHT would need to decide what the cap would be \$2,500-\$3,000.

Mr. Irish said he would reach out to Norwell to see how their program is run; he believes it is handled in-house and applications are reviewed twice a year.

There was discussion if AHT funds could be used for the administration piece, but funds are all CPC so it would have to be drilled down to see if it is an allowable use of funds. There was positive reaction to the idea of being able to help Seniors and Veterans who are homeowner's and ultimately would have to meet all the criteria for being eligible for the program.

Ms. Chapman suggested that the other members "Google Small Grant Repairs Program" to get a sense of what other towns' do and offer.

Ms. Chapman said she would put a draft together for the program, i.e. criteria, administration, etc.

Ms. Curran to speak with Mr. Boudreau and Ms. Holt, eventually the Trust would need to go before the Select Board.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Ms. Elizabeth Howie has been appointed as new member of the Trust
- Potentially another resident may be interested in joining the Trust; resident is a Realtor

Old Senior Center - Veteran's Housing

Ms. Curran discussed a potential item for the Trust to pursue regarding the Scituate Housing Authority (SHA) property Lincoln Park in North Scituate. SHA has been approaching the Town regarding their water bill; currently there is one water bill for the entire facility and it is not very cost effective. Single meters would allow the facility to have individuals billed based on their usage rate. The SHA has asked for the metering system to change and they have been told that is not going to happen. Ms. Curran is proposing that if the SHA was able to get a quote for retro fitting the facility to reduce the water costs would the AHT consider using AHT funds to help. Ms. Curran explained that the rates are different from one single meter to individual meters.

Ms. Chapman said that the SHA should have other sources of funding to address this issue. Ms. Curran said the SHA has not come to her to ask for the AHT to do this, but they have come to the town to fix it. There were questions about the SHA funding and where it comes from as they should be the first place the SHA goes to for assistance.

Ms. Chapman opined she does not think it is an appropriate use of AHT funds, because there should be other funding sources. Ms. Curran said the AHT provide \$50K for new windows for the Central Park facility and Ms. Chapman said she felt the same way about that project.

Ms. Wagner said if there are other sources of funding that is where they should go first; she would hope they have exhausted those before coming to the AHT.

Mr. Irish said the last projects done, the cupola and windows were done with CPC money; the money came out of the affordable community bucket.

There was discussion how the SHA handles the water bill; is it broken by and passed along to the tenants It was not known for sure how it is done. Ms. Chapman said she does not think the tenants are charged for water, but it is the Housing Authority that is paying the bill. She said she has never heard of subsidized housing charging tenants for water.

Ms. Curran to look into and provide more details.

Old Senior Center -Veteran's Housing

Ms. Curran proposed another project for the AHT to consider. She said she has put the old Senior Center on hold so that it is not auctioned off. She would like to explore affordable housing opportunities for Veterans. She is thinking of calling the Veteran's Council to help with identifying different funds and resourced to work with or maybe partner with them.

Mr. Irish asked Ms. Curran to ask if the Veteran's Council if they have partnered with Wellspring and/or Father Bill's in Hingham.

Ms. Chapman said she may be able to tap into some other resources from her previous work experience.

The members of the AHT are in support of pursuing this idea.

Ms. Curran to provide additional feedback once she has spoken to the Veteran's Council.

OLD BUSINESS:

Was covered in small grants program.

Ms. Curran made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Wagner seconded the motion; a roll call was taken and the vote was unanimously in favor.

Ms. Chapman – yes

Ms. Curran – yes

Ms. Wagner - yes

Mr. Irish – yes

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Submitted by: Shari Moak Young

Approved: November 17, 2021