

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2021

ATTENDEES: Steve Irish, Chair; Nancy Chapman; Ruth Wagner, Maura Curran, Elizabeth Howie

Additional Attendees: Shari Young, Admin

Public Attendees:

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm.

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

New Member Introduction:

Ms. Elizabeth Howie introduced herself as the newest member of the AHT; from New Jersey, believes communities need to help build/promote afford places for people to live, wants to help make Scituate a viable place for people to live and work. Formerly taught Interior Design.

MINUTES:

Ms. Wagner moved to accept the meeting minutes for October 2021, Ms. Curran seconded the motion; a vote was taken and unanimously in favor.

There was a brief discussion if anyone had attended the Planning Board meeting regarding the proposed project at 7 New Driftway and the subsequent affordable units to potentially be built on AHT property at Stockbridge Road; no members attended the meeting.

DISCUSSION: Small Repairs Grant Program

Documents:

- DRAFT Scituate Small Repair Grant Program 11.11.21
- Concord Housing Development Corporation packet
- Needham Small Repair Grant Program packet
- Weston AHT Home Repair Grant packet
- Norwell Community Housing Trust Small Housing Grant Program
- Bedford Small Repairs Grant packet

Ms. Chapman provided a first draft of a Small Repairs Grant program for Scituate as well as several examples of surrounding communities existing programs. She gave an overview of how she approached writing the program and opened it up for discussion.

- Two tracks for the program – deed restricted properties (approx. 20 units) and general population
- Proposing to start the program with \$25K-\$30K for each track
- Individual grants could be \$2,500-\$3,000

- Grant is to correct small deficiencies or make a modification/adaptation for accessibility
- Small Repairs Grant program was discussed in the most recent Housing Production Plan
- Examples provided from surrounding towns
 - Weston – is only program that deals with deed restricted units
 - Norwell, Bedford, Concord, Needham
 - Examples of marketing, criteria, eligibility guidelines, applications, etc. was provided

There was discussion if there are regulations from the State on how the criteria for the program is built, i.e. percentage of household income, assessed value of home, average value of home; it was not known at this point, but is something that would have to be looked into.

Ms. Chapman reviewed some of the proposed eligibility criteria;

- Have to be a homeowner in Scituate
- Commitment not to sell the home for up to 12 months after the grant is received and give the AHT the right of first refusal for purchase 60 days prior to going on the market
- House assessment criteria
- Household income criteria for all members living in the household
- Possible age requirement
 - If Scituate proposes an age requirement would also suggest opening it up to persons with disabilities.
- Extend to Veterans, Scituate could be a leader in that criteria.
 - Veterans would still have to meet all other requirements, etc. Ms. Chapman said she has not seen anything geared specifically to Veterans.

Mr. Irish indicated he reached out to Norwell to discuss their program; he was not able to find out exactly how the program is being funded, but it was suggested to sign up for an email alert through CHAPA for when funding becomes available. The funds the AHT currently has are all from CPC and can only be used for deed restricted properties. He also said Norwell uses a term “circuit breaker income qualifier” and does not know what that means, so something to further investigate. He said Norwell mentioned they have had some flexibility with some guidelines, i.e. age, income depending on the situation. He provided an annual report and program numbers from Norwell; since its history there have been 19 grants for \$32,000 in at least 5 yrs., in the last fiscal year \$3,975 was granted. He said the program is restrictive; it requires estimates from qualified contractors, payment is made directly to contractors and not the homeowner, program is for 60yrs. and older, if house is sold within twelve months of receiving the grant money needs to be paid back, the Council on Aging administers the program, they help people fill out applications, do all the prescreening, once that is complete the application is sent over to the Community Housing Trust to make final determination.

Ms. Chapman suggested hiring Karen Sunnaborg to administer the program; she could be set up at the Council on Aging.

There would need to be a list of things that qualify for a grant, i.e. painting, wallpapering, grab bars, etc.

There was further discussion on where town’s get the funds from to have such a program. Ms. Chapman discussed information previously provided from Ms. Sunnaborg that Needham received funds from the General Budget at their Town Meeting, other funding could come from payments made in lieu of unit production, negotiated fees with developers or donations.

Ms. Curran suggested if there is push back on the sale of the Old Senior Center, potentially the AHT could ask for \$100K and that could provide an alternate funding source from CPC funds to get the program started for the general public.

Ms. Chapman opined that if this gets started the AHT needs to understand what year two, year three look like and how sustainable the program would be. At this point with the AHT funds it would seem the program could be sustained for several years for just the affordable/deed restricted units.

Ms. Curran said it is budget time now, if the AHT wants to get this up and running the request needs to be made now to Mr. Boudreau and Ms. Holt and the Select Board. Ms. Curran recommends that the AHT go before the Select Board to pitch the idea and then the Select Board would direct the Town Administrator and Finance Director to identify an amount of funds that could be allocated to the AHT for the program. The AHT wants the support of as many town agencies, etc. as they can get. The AHT would ideally like to launch both programs at the same time, deed restricted and general public. The parameters of the program need to be developed first.

Ms. Chapman said she would reach out to Karen Sunnaborg to discuss the potential to hire her as the administrator of the program.

Ms. Curran to reach out to Patrick O'Connor's office regarding funding sources.

There was discussion about reaching out to larger towns to see how much has been spent on their programs. There was also continued discussion about other funding sources.

Ideas for marketing the program were also discussed; mailing, 95.9 WATV, Scituate Community TV, flyers, etc.

The AHT is going to work to get something in for this budget cycle by January 2022; Ms. Curran will discuss with Mr. Boudreau.

Ms. Howie said there needs to be a way to vet the people doing the work before they are allowed to be hired and funds are distributed to them; she suggested there should be an approved list of vendors. Mr. Irish said Norwell does require something similar.

The AHT also needs to create a database or something to track the work/grants that are completed.

DISCUSSION/UPDATE: Old Senior Center and Proposal for Veteran's Housing

Ms. Curran provided an update on her meeting with the Veteran's Advisory Council (VAC) regarding the proposal to partner with them to provide affordable housing on the property of the old Senior Center. She said she also spoke with the TA and the land is assessed at \$700K, that would be the money the town would be losing out on if it is not sold privately.

- 9/11 Veteran's in need of help, younger Veteran's have a harder time asking for assistance and/or finding assistance.
- There is a stigma around "Veteran's Housing"; should think about offering "Veteran's preference" to remove the stigma
- Father Bill/Mainspring did come to Scituate to discuss a partnership similar to what has been done in Hingham several years ago, and a local developer had also expressed interest in a Veteran's Development
- Ms. Curran will call Mainspring to discuss their previous interest
- Mr. Boudreau, TA, will contact Norwell to discuss their Veteran's preference in the new building on River Street.
 - AHT to find out who Norwell partnered with for the project
- There was discussion if the entire lot is developable

There was discussion about the Hingham facility, Fort Hill Veteran Housing. Ms. Chapman spoke about some of her professional experience with providing supportive services to Veteran's housing facilities. The AHT needs to decide if the units would be more of a supportive nature or just affordable. There are many things to consider, i.e. who the partner is, the neighbors and neighborhood, best use of the lot, opening up to other groups, etc.

Ms. Curran said she would call Father Bill Facility for more information.

Discussion also included providing affordable housing options for Scituate Public Employees, fire fighters, police, etc. It is very difficult to find affordable housing in the town where the average assessed home value is in the high \$600K range. Ms. Howie spoke of her personal experience with the Avalon apartments in Cohasset. She opined there is really no such thing as affordable housing for a teacher's salary, etc. The AHT proposal could include both Veteran's and Scituate Public Employees; a property management company would need to be found to manage the rental units and a partner would be need to design and build the facility.

There is question if the building itself is salvageable or if it just needs to be torn down; building likely needs to be torn down.

Ms. Wagner will do some research on Small Affordable Housing Developers/Units.

Ms. Howie said Affordable Housing Developers would be looking for tax benefits and would have to pay prevailing wage, etc. and suggested the project would have to be done with a private developer to avoid some complications.

Ms. Curran is going to reach out to the Grantham Group, Mike Cucchiara.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Next meeting December 15th

DISCUSSION/UPDATE: Scituate Housing Authority Water Bill/Meter

Ms. Curran has not been able to get in touch with the Housing Authority.

Ms. Chapman said she did some research and found residents of Lincoln Park, do not pay for heat and hot water and rent is based on 25% of their income. She said any Housing Authority has an annual budget and capital budget.

Ms. Curran said this has been an ongoing conversation for years.

Ms. Chapman expressed that if the SHA came formally before the Trust she would have some hard questions and request documentation on their capital budget, etc. Ms. Curran said she would pass the information along.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Submitted by: Shari Moak Young

Approved: December 15, 2021