**Affordable Housing Trust**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, October 14, 2015 7 pm**

**WPA Building, North Scituate**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Barbara Cox, Stephen Irish, Ruth Wagner

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Update on Potentially Renting 11 Nelson Road to Family in Need**

Mr. Irish told the Committee members that, at the last meeting (on 10/6), they were still trying to figure out if they could offer this unit as a rental and what measures needed to be taken to be in compliance with Affordable Housing laws.

The Scituate Housing Authority (HA) was waiting for direction from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and South Shore Housing (SSH) before deciding how to proceed. The DHCD said that it was not under the jurisdiction of the HA to do anything [to assist the Trust and manage the property] because they did not own the property.

Mr. Irish heard from SSH and the DHCD who said that renting the property is not in the scope of what the trust can do. The Trust has no capacity or structure to be a landlord, unless they go through a lot of gymnastics.

Mr. Irish read the following excerpt from an email sent by Paul McPartland, Asset Management Coordinator at the Department of Housing and Community Development, Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding the current situation:

*“Glad we connected on the phone today about the above-captioned family’s situation.  I understand that your organization, the Scituate Affordable Housing Trust, has been trying to figure out a way to help the family, and that you are gathering information from the Scituate Housing Authority (SHA) and South Shore Housing Development Corp as you assess your options.  Based on our conversation, it seems likely that you may not be in a position to house the family in the condo owned by your AHT for a variety of reasons, including the need for time to determine whether you plan to rent or sell the condo, determine the sale or rental price, advertise publicly for applicants to create a wait list for the unit, and then conduct a lottery, which would likely be required to comply with fair housing laws.  I understand that you will be working through these and other issues with your fellow board members.*

*Dealing with a single unit of housing and an all-volunteer board can be particularly challenging, since there is little operating money and no economy of scale.  In the event that your board and the SHA decide to consider the possibility of working together on how to preserve the affordability of this housing unit long-term, you may want to consider the following questions/issues as a starting point:*

1. *Does the Trust want to give the house to the SHA, and if so does the SHA want it?  If so, there is a process for that but DHCD and the SHA would need to thoroughly inspect it, evaluate the cost to ready it for occupancy (is there lead paint, are there sanitary/building code violations, etc.) and also look at its short to intermediate term capital needs and come up with a plan to finance them.*
2. *Does the Trust want to keep the house?  If so, do they want to hire the SHA to manage it?  If the AHT is a public agency they presumably need to comply with MGL c. 30B in hiring a management agent, although perhaps a contract between them and the SHA may be exempt since both would be public bodies.  But in any event the SHA shouldn’t take any responsibility for the building until a contract is in place and other issues like insurance are addressed.*
3. *If the SHA manages the house and it is not added to their public housing portfolio, they need to keep a separate set of books for it.  That is, they need to track time spent by SHA staff doing administrative and maintenance work there and bill that to the AFT.  They would track rental income, and use some to create a capital reserve for future capital costs.   The SHA can’t legally use state public housing resources to support any building that isn’t state public housing in any way unless they are fully and immediately reimbursed.*
4. *My understanding is that fair housing law generally requires a transparent public process for the selection of a family to live in a publicly supported housing development.  Margaux LeClair in our Legal office could probably discuss this issue in more detail if you need advice, or perhaps local town counsel can assist you, but in any event it is definitely an important consideration.*

The Members agreed that to get through all of the above would take months; in addition they would need to figure out how to qualify tenants.

Mr. Irish also shared emails from Jennifer Lopes (Social Worker at the High School) and Laura Minier (Manager, Social Services, Town of Scituate) who both indicated that the family was running out of options. It was suggested that the DTA – Department of Transitional Assistance – may offer some help with emergency housing and Rosie’s Place may advocate for the family. The Committee also discussed how the local churches could help the family. Mr. Irish said that he had suggested to the social workers that the Foyer of Charity may be able to offer some help.

It was agreed that the Trust was not able to help this particular family at this time.

Mr. Irish discussed a proposal that they offer the Nelson Road property to the HA but it was unclear if they would want to take this on. It was noted that the HA properties were all located on campuses. They could also try to list it again for sale or for rent and see which happens first. Ms. Wagner questioned whether or not the Trust should even own property.

There was additional discussion on whether or not to rent the unit, how to qualify tenants and the many bureaucratic road blocks related to housing issues. Ms. Cox said that they would need to decide what to do with this property going forward and suggested selling it as a moderate income property.

Mr. Irish asked if the Trust could give a grant to the Scituate Community Resource Fund (SCRF) as a way to help families in emergencies. He will need to determine if that is possible. Mr. Irish said he would also determine how the SCRF was actually funded. It was mentioned that the SCRF was most likely used for a variety of purposes.

Ms. Wagner said that it would offer a band aid but would not solve the problem. Ms. Cox asked if the Trust could set up a separate Grant or Trust specifically to be used for emergency housing. There was additional discussion on whether the Trust could do that, as their primary mission is affordable housing.

It was noted that $600,000 of the Trust’s funds has been earmarked for the Senior Housing project behind Central Park. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) had rescinded some money because the other allocations had not been spent but that they could get additional CPC money in the future.

Mr. Irish said that Community Resources Group will move ahead with the regulatory issues for both the Stockbridge Road and Nelson Road properties.

A MOTION to adjourn was made at 7:51 pm; All in Favor.

*Submitted by:*

*Mary Sprague*

*Administrative Assistant*