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**AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST**  
**PUBLIC MEETING**

**Thursday, October 10, 2019, 7:00 p.m.**  
**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

**In Attendance**

**Members:** John Hornik, Paul Bockelman, Rob Crowner, William Van Heuvelen, Tom Kegelman, Sid Ferreira, Nancy Schroder (7).

**Staff:** Nate Malloy, Rita Farrell, John Page

**Guests:** Nancy Buffone and Tony Maroulis of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Laura Baker of Valley Community Development, State Representative Mindy Domb, Janet McGowen, Peter Gray-Mullen, Christine Gray-Mullen, Maura Keene, Chad Fuller, Kathleen Anderson.

**Absent:** Erica Piedade, Carol Lewis

Prepared by John Page

Meeting Called to Order: 7:05PM

**Business**

**1. Announcements/Updates**

Nate shared the that Town staff have begun looking at the Strong Street property and will be doing a wetlands analysis. He also will try to locate documentation on the property for when it was slated to be developed into a sub-development.

John updated the Trust that Craig's Place Homeless Shelter has hired one part-time shelter manager, with second to be named soon. In addition, they have several candidates for Executive Director of the agency and that a person will be selected sometime in the next week. The shelter is expected to open November 1 – on schedule; if not, mid-November.

**2. Approve Minutes from September Meeting**

*Trust votes by consensus to approve minutes from September 12, 2019 meeting.*

**3. UMass Residential Plans (North Village & Lincoln Apartments)**

Nancy Buffone, Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations and Tony Maroulis, Executive Director of External Relations and University Events were present from the University. John emphasized when that when asking questions to remember to pose questions and or make comments of the University not individuals.

John shared that on the October 7 Town Council Meeting community members passionately shared about their appreciation for North Village and the community created there. During that same

meeting the University clarified much about the proposed public private partnership (P3) for residential units on campus at North Village and along Massachusetts Avenue (effecting Lincoln apartments). John posed the question to the University officials what the vision is underlying the University's residential plans for North Village and Lincoln Apartments.

Nancy and Tony explained that this project will occur through a public-private partnership (P3) – a fairly new procurement method for the Amherst campus. They further explained that this is an alternative way for a public entity such as UMass to finance a construction project. In particular, if the Amherst campus intends any large capital investment at this juncture it will have to employ this method given the fact that they have reached their debt ceiling which limits their ability to borrow.

John confirmed the Trust support of building additional residential units on campus but has concerns firstly, about short-term displacement and impacts on the already very competitive local off-campus housing market and secondly, that with the influx of first-year students this year the modest addition does not go far enough.

Tony explained that for the individuals currently living in North Village the University will be offering housing at nearby Brandywine Apartments for the time that the units are offline ensuring families with school-age children will be able to remain in the Wildwood Elementary community and district. Residents would pay the same as their current rental rate, adjusted for the customary annual inflationary increases. For those that elect not to be housed at the Brandywine location, full moving services will be provided by the University.

Regarding pressure on the local housing market, Tony emphasized that this project will bring more units online for both undergraduates and graduate students – noting that half of the North Village units are currently offline because they do not meet health and safety standards.

John referenced the gap between enrolled students, approximately 30,000, and those housed on campus, approximately 13,000, and how relocating all the current residents of Lincoln Apartments and North Village only exacerbates this issue.

Tony responded that not all those students – undergraduate and graduate live or intend to live in Amherst citing himself as an example: a Pelham resident, if he enrolled in a Master's program at the University he would not be seeking additional housing. Tony offered to provide more detailed student enrollment data and some information about where students, faculty, and staff live based on information the University has. John maintained that his point remains – there will be hundreds more people injected in the off-campus housing market and at least from 2020-2022 that will have an impact on the already competitive housing market in Amherst.

Rita asked for clarification on the timeline for the project. Nancy and Tony shared their goal is having a new facility online at North Village by Fall of 2022. In order for that to happen North Village will close in June 2020.

Nancy Schroder asked the University to confirm that they will be adhering to the Uniform Relocation Act for North Village families and what attempts are being made to preserve the unique community that has developed at North Village. The University reiterated that as committed to at the October 7 Town Council meeting, the University will be conforming to all legal obligations requirements including the Uniform Relocation Act. Nancy Buffone, expanded saying that we are relocating North Village residents together at Brandywine Apartments, and are meeting with each and every family to determine their needs, requests, and desires during this time of transition

accommodating as much as they can, and conforming with all appropriate regulations. Rita added that one of the main components of compliance is filing a formal written relocation plan with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The University expressed their intent to file a formal relocation plan. The Trust asked to be forwarded the written relocation plan when submitted.

Nancy Schroder asked if the University intends to relocate and file a relocation plan for the current residents of Lincoln Apartments. The University officials shared that there is no plan for that at this time, but University counsel is looking into it and they will report back the final decision regarding relocation obligations on the University's part for Lincoln Apartment residents.

Rob Crowners asked why these projects could not be staged as not to disrupt both the residents and mitigate impact on the off-campus housing market. The University explained that the way the underground infrastructure of North Village was constructed it will be prohibitively costly to do unit by unit, in addition nearly half the units are already offline at that location, and there was concern about the health and safety of all residents including children with such close proximity to construction. Rob continued, with that understanding, why both North Village and Lincoln Apartments at the same time. The University said a single RFP was a cost savings measure and that in addition both locations are beyond their useable life and the University is eager to add the new units.

Trust members raised the issue of transparency and accountability of University actions – expressing that there are very few ways for the Amherst community to anticipate and provide feedback on University development decisions. John admitted that while the Town and the Trust do not have legal mechanism of much leverage to alter University plans, the Trust wishes to better understand and play a role in shaping the implementation here at the Amherst campus. Furthermore, John noted that the University-Town of Amherst Committee (UTAC) is currently dormant, and that the few conversations that are occurring with Town staff and Board/Committee Chairs are happening behind closed doors not in a public setting. Tony shared the history of UTAC and noted that the transition of government played a role on the groups status and expressed a willingness to revive the group in some form in the future. He furthermore agreed to give the Trust periodic updates on the P3 and other projects related to housing.

In summary, University officials agreed to

- An open line of communication through Tony Maroulis, Executive Director of External Relations and University Events.
- Keep the Trust and Town apprised to the status of this project as well as future projects that impact the community.
- Forward a copy of the University's formal relocation plan for North Village residents when it is filed with DHCD.
- Update Trust on status of Lincoln Apartment residents and if the Uniform Relocation Act applies to them once University Counsel has investigated this topic fully.
- Provide the Trust with more detailed student enrollment data and limited information on students' residence – with the shared goal of creating more accurate picture of where University students, faculty, and staff are living.

#### **4. CPA-AMAHT Collaboration**

John shared with Trust Members that he will present to Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee Chair on Tuesday, October 15, at 7PM in the First Floor Conference Room of Town Hall to review draft Town Housing Policy and discuss long-term vision for CPA-AMAHT collaboration to

plan for community housing. He also encouraged any Trust members to attend and participate in the October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. John's strategy is to create a plan by reviewing past requests, determining what AMAHT & CPA is looking to support in future projects, developing a multi-year budget plan, and tailoring a request for proposals (RFP) to reflect established priorities. *See CPA-AMAHT Collaboration outlined in detail in 10/10/19 agenda packet.*

***The Trust unanimously voted to move forward with the multi-year CPAC-AMAHT collaboration strategy.***

#### **5. Housing Forum - Penultimate Plan**

John shared an updated draft plan for the Fall Housing Forum titled "Opportunities for Growth" on Monday, November 4, 6:45-9PM in the Social Hall at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst. Speakers will include John Hornik on behalf of the Trust, a representative from the League of Women Voter of Amherst, Paul Bockelman or David Zoimek providing an update on housing developments in Amherst, and State Representative Mindy Domb & State Senator Jo Comerford providing a state legislative update. Following these presentations, community members gathered will divide into breakout groups on 1) Town Housing Policy, 2) Homelessness, 3) Legislation & Advocacy at the State Level, and 4) Increasing Access to Affordable Rentals. Trust members commended John's revised plan agreeing that it balanced the Trust's desire to be informative and action oriented. Trust members noted that this is an opportunity to build both public support for a Town Housing Policy and to seek out community members to work with the Trust and Collation. Trust members sought to leverage Representative Domb & Senator Comerford's presence at the event to boost turn-out and engagement – citing this as a special opportunity to hear from and speak to state and local leaders. *See complete Fall Housing forum plan in the 10/10/19 agenda packet.*

***The Trust unanimously voted to move forward the Fall Housing Forum plan as presented.***

#### **6. Responding to residential needs of persons who are homeless: Reports and discussion on encampments and tiny houses.**

Trust Members Carol, Erica, Nancy and Coalition member Chad have been doing research on addressing homelessness in Amherst. Chad shared about his knowledge of tiny houses and accessory dwelling units. Nate confirmed that development of tiny houses would require zoning changes. Rob recommended bringing this up with members of the Zoning Subcommittee (ZSC) of the Planning Board. Drawing from her experience at the Amherst Housing Authority (AHA), Nancy identified first, last, and deposit as a barrier to placement of extremely low-income people. John reiterated that we have a community that is potentially willing to invest both public and private resources of land, materials, and financial resources, however, the largest barrier remains—finding an operator to manage such a facility. More information on encampments is needed. Paul noted that Public Health Director Julie Federman's expertise is an important piece of that conversation, as is the Chief Livingstone's.

#### **7. Affordable Housing Advocacy Coalition**

John shared that at the last meeting of the Amherst Affordable Housing Advocacy Coalition meeting participants voted to send individual notes to Senator Comerford and Representative Domb.

#### **8. Consideration of Draft Town Affordable Housing Policy**

Chair is currently presenting to and gathering all comments from Town Council Community Resources Community (CRC) and Planning Board. John is asking bodies to provide feedback and recommend changes by December meeting. Then the Trust will have to reconcile the suggestions

and produce a new draft and begin the work of transforming this document into a true housing policy. John stressed the importance of integrating the feedback of all stakeholders into a policy that the whole Town can commit to implementing.

**9. Upcoming Meetings:**

- a. Housing Coalition, Tuesday, October 22, 6:30 PM. Room 101 Bangs Center
- b. Housing Forum, Monday, November 4, 6:30 PM, Unitarian Universalist Society Social Hall
- c. Housing Trust, Thursday, November 14, 7 PM, First Floor Meeting Room of Town Hall

**10. Public Comment** – None.

**11. Items not anticipated by the Chair within 48 hours** – None.

Meeting adjourned 9:30PM.