



AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, February 13, 2020
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

In Attendance

Members: John Hornik, Carol Lewis, Erica Piedade, Rob Crowner, Nancy Schroder, Tom Kegelman, Sid Ferreira (7)

Staff: Rita Farrell, John Page

Guests: Planning Board Member Janet McGowan, Janet Keller of the Amherst Community Land Trust, Maura Keene, Donna Cabana of Valley Community Development Corporation (CDC).

Absent: Paul Bockelman, William Van Heuvelen (2)

Prepared by John Page.

Meeting called to order at 7:00PM.

1. Announcements

Nancy Schroder shared that she will be resigning from the Trust. She will continue to serve on the Homelessness & Increasing Access Subcommittees of the Trust. Nancy is taking on a new part-time role in the Town of Amherst Health Department.

2. Approve Minutes from January Meeting

Trust members reviewed and made typographical corrections to the minutes.

VOTE: To approve 1/9/19 meeting minutes.
Minutes approved unanimously as corrected.

3. Discussion CPA Funding Status

John provided an update on the status of community housing CPA proposals:

- a. Valley CDC's Homeownership Program request was granted at the full amount. The approved \$250,000 will cover \$50,000 each toward a down payment for 4 homebuyers with \$50,000 contributing to administrative costs for the program, specifically staff salary.



- b. The Trust's request for \$40,000 for consulting services was withdrawn because of funds remaining from prior CPA requests. \$40,000 remains in the Trust account toward consulting purposes. John explained that consulting cost have come in significantly underbudget during the previous two cycles.
- c. The Trust's request for \$400,000 in project funding is to be decided by CPAC tonight (2/13/20). John shared that while the Trust may not receive the full amount it will likely receive a portion. Overall, John concluded he was glad to see the CPAC's commitment to and investment in community housing.

4. Update on East Street School Site and Affordable Housing

After concluding that the single submission by Valley CDC did not meet the criteria in the RFP, the selection committee held one meeting with Joanne Campbell and Laura Baker of Valley CDC, as wells a follow-up meeting with Town staff which included Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Town Procurement Officer Anthony Delaney, Senior Planner Nate Malloy, Housing Trust Chair John Hornik, and Selection Committee Member Connie Kruger.

As a result, John proposed that the next step to move the East Street project forward is delineating the wetlands boundary. The Town and the Trust would conduct a study in the Spring and bring the final study to the Conservation Commission to be approved, so that any future bidder would know for sure what portion of the land is buildable. Additionally, because no asbestos report can be located, John suggested conducting a hazardous materials analysis of the site. Completing these analyses would reduce unknown factors and thus risk for future bidders.

VOTE: Approve the allocation of up to \$20,000 for site analysis at the East Street School site.

MOTION: Tom

SECOND: Sid

VOTE PASSES unanimously 6-0-0.

Reflecting, Trust members came to a consensus that going forward the Trust should do more site work upfront to reduce risk and streamline the process including in-depth wetlands delineation of future sites.

From the discussion, an outstanding question remained: whether a developer will be able to preserve the school building and achieve the number of units required by the RFP. The Town has expressed a preference for keeping the school building, while a developer may see utilizing the school building as an additional cost.

5. Update from Subcommittee on Improving Access to Housing

Carol reported out that the subcommittee met on Monday, February 10, 2020 and discussed the next steps. They identified nine agencies or organizations that directly provide financial or direct counseling assistance. They have drafted interview questions. The subcommittee is still in the learning and listening stage gathering information from the experts across agencies. Draft minutes from the subcommittee meeting are included in the February 13, 2020 Trust packet.

6. Discussion of UMass Plans for New Residential Development

The University has released an RFI for the residential development on campus replacing Lincoln Apartments and North Village at Massachusetts Avenue and North Pleasant Street, respectively.

Trust members raised the following questions about the proposed on-campus housing:

- What is their definition of affordable?
- How affordable will rents be?
- What control will the University exercise over the housing?
- Will there be any limitation on the rents?
- What is the cost of current on-campus housing to students?
- What is the income level of UMass student families?
- Will the Town gain any tax revenue from these developments? Did the University Trustees approve the project with expectation of complete tax-exempt status?
- What is the Universities vision for these mixed-use buildings? What would they expect to see in the commercial spaces?
- What progress has been made on mitigating displacement of students and families?

Trust members concluded that it was necessary to invite Nancy Buffone and Tony Maroulis of University Relations back to the next Trust Meeting to share more about the progress of the project and answer the Trust's questions.

7. Review and Discussion of Town Housing Policy

John reported out that the Town Council's Finance Committee and Community Resource Committee (CRC) both submitted reports on the Trust's proposed Town Housing Policy. While the Finance Committee report expresses an aversion to spending municipal funds on housing, the CRC report seeks to address Amherst's housing crisis in a holistic way. At the February 10th Council meeting, the two reports were referred back to CRC to develop a comprehensive housing policy. CRC Chair Mandi Jo Hanneke will be redrafting the policy with assistance from Trust Chair John Hornik.

Addressing the Finance Committee's concerns, the Trust discussed affordable housing funding opportunities. Tom noted no money from the Town's general fund would be used



in the development of affordable housing. CPA money and Trust money would go toward affordable housing.

Responding to Councilor's desire to address housing at every level while limiting the use of municipal funds, John raised the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund as a future funding source. The MAHTF supports the creation or preservation of housing that is affordable to people with incomes that do not exceed 110%. Trust members discussed the patchwork structure of funding which makes an affordable housing project feasible and what requirements are imposed. For example, the MAHTF can cover housing in the 80-110% range, however only up to \$50,000 per unit, while tax incentive financing requires 60% AMI units and below. Tom and Laura shared from their project management experience the capital funding matrix required to make an affordable housing project financially feasible, explaining that the funding sources ultimately dictate the income mix or affordability level of a project.

Both Planning Board and the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC) have not taken up the policy. John reported PB Chair Christine Gray-Mullen stated policy lacked specific zoning recommendations, so there was not content for the PB to vet. She was not, however, opposed to the Town Council adopting a broad housing policy to meet housing production and affordability goals.

The Trust debated the merits of including specific zoning recommendations in the Town Housing Policy. John contended that specific zoning recommendations would be out of place in a policy document meant to cast a vision and provide guidance for decision-making. Instead, he offered that future zoning changes should be vetted through the lens of the Town Housing Policy. Nate agreed that zoning and land use regulations are too specific for a housing policy. Rob maintained that incremental changes in zoning will not result in the production of a significant number of housing units, recommending instead, separate from the Housing Policy a town-wide conversation about a comprehensive zoning reform.

The Trust discussed the Master Plan and the Housing Production plan guides and goals while the housing policy was an implementation tool to reach housing goals.

John mentioned current topics before the Zoning Subcommittee of the Planning Board which would affect housing including changing Amherst's inclusionary zoning bylaw, changing the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations, and allowing multi-family by right. Expectation that consultants will produce a draft 40R proposal. The revision of the Master Plan will be dovetailed with this responsibility.

8. Discuss advocacy for 132 Northampton Road

John shared with Trust members that Valley CDC submitted their project eligibility letter to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in late January. During this phase the Town, through the Town Manager, has 30 days to provide comments to DHCD. The 30-day comment period started on January 31, 2020 when the Town received the notification letter from DHCD. Comments can be made at www.amherstma.gov/3520/Valley-CDC-132-Northampton-Road. John encouraged individual Trust members and affordable housing advocates to submit letters of support for the project.

Laura Baker of Valley CDC reported that DHCD had done site visit on February 10th. Abutters, neighbors, and three town councilors present. DHCD assessed the appropriateness of site. Laura explained the next step, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) hearing would be the forum for neighbors to express concerns on parking, noise, and aesthetics of the project. She also asked for supporters of the proposed supportive housing at the location to attend ZBA hearings to provide their testimony.

9. Discuss Legislative Advocacy

John sent letters of support for An Act Promoting Housing Stability which provides the right to counsel in housing court and An Act Promoting Housing Opportunity and Mobility through Eviction Sealing (HOMES) to Town Council. Councilors Pat DeAngelis and Mandi Jo Hanneke are preparing resolutions to be taken up at their February 24th meeting.

10. Public Comment — None.

11. Items not anticipated within 48 hours — None.

12. Upcoming Meetings/Events:

- a. CHAPA: Making the Case for Affordable Housing in Your Community, Friday, February 21, 9 am - 12:30 PM, 100 High Street, 10th Floor, Boston.
- b. By invitation, Saturday, February 22, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm, Framingham.
- c. MHP Western Mass Housing Conference, April 16, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, Hadley Farms Meeting House
- d. Housing Coalition: February 18, 6:30 PM, Bangs Center
- e. Backyard Tiny Homes, Monday, March 2, 6:30-8:30 PM, Bangs Center with Chris Lee (This is a marketing event).
- f. Housing Trust: Thursday, March 12, 7 PM.

Meeting adjourned 9:05PM.