



---

**AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST  
PUBLIC MEETING**

**Thursday, October 14th, 2021  
7:00 PM**

**Virtual Zoom Meeting:** <https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/81593115763>

**Video recording available at:**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

**Trust Members:** Allegra Clark, John Hornik, Sidonio Ferreira, Carol Lewis, Erica Piedade, William Van Heuvelen

**Absent:** Robert Crowner, Paul Bockelman

**Staff:** Rita Farrell, Nate Malloy, Lucia Turowski

**Guests:** Laura Baker, Janet Bruce, State Representative Mindy Domb, Amherst Community Connections, Tim Fay, Sean Mangano, David Ziomek

Prepared by Lucia Turowski

Meeting called to order at 7:11

**1. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**A.** Trust vacancy, encourage applications

**2. REVIEW MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER MEETINGS:** No comments.

**3. DISCUSSION ON USE OF ARPA FUNDS WITH SEAN MANGANO, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

Sean Mangano shared the [Engage Amherst Page on ARPA funds](#). He explained that the Town is now in public engagement mode: two listening sessions so far and a third scheduled for October 21<sup>st</sup>. There is a Q&A feature of the page to ask questions or provide feedback.

[The presentation to Town Council on ARPA fund allocation](#) can be located on this page. He pointed to a few sections within the presentation that related to housing that the town has earmarked funds for, but that require more collaboration and planning to develop specific programs.

- a. Section on homelessness, \$1 million earmarked to explore transitional housing opportunities and identify and implement solutions to shelter problems.
- b. Section on affordable housing, another \$1 million dollars earmarked to look for opportunities to expand the affordable housing stock and work collaboratively with the Housing Trust on housing assistance programs.
- c. Section on sustainability, \$510,000 earmarked. Suggestion that Housing Trust's program for retrofitting affordable housing units could potentially come out of this allocation of funds. The town plans to work with ECAC to find programs with the greatest reduction in fossil fuel usage.

Sean mentioned all of these allocations are in draft form and welcomed feedback on them.

Carol Lewis asked if these earmarked funds are given to particular entities or if anybody could submit a suggestion.

Sean Mangano responded that anyone is able to submit suggestions to the Town and now is the time to do it. Ultimately the Town Manager will finalize the spending plan in November and then go back to the Council to present the final spending plan. The Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager and the Sustainability Coordinator will guide the use of funds, but will work with other stakeholders to determine how to allocate the funds.

Sean pointed to other items the Trust might be interested in:

- a. Proposal for a new temporary position over a few years, a transition support coordinator, to be an expert on all the different assistance programs and services that exist in the town to walk people through complicated processes. The position would also look to identify if there are gaps in the current social service network.
- b. A resident emergency fund to provide temporary support for anyone facing an emergency due to COVID.

John Hornik asked if the \$12 million is spread across three years.

Sean Mangano clarified that the \$12 million has to be obligated by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 and has to be spent by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026 [FY2027].

Carol Lewis [referring to the pie chart of ARPA fund allocation on page 8] pointed out that round one allocates 80% of grant funds, she inquired if that meant that there is still 20% left that is not included in the [presentation](#).

Sean Mangano responded that the first round allocates 80%, or \$9 million, of the grant money holding back 20% in the thought to do a similar process one year from now. First, if there are any more revenue issues on the municipal side, the funds can help close revenue gaps. Also holding back some funds in case there are other ideas that come up after the first round. And additionally, holding some funds back in case some of the programs chosen in the first round are successful, there will be funds to allocate more.

Laura Baker asked if using ARPA funds triggers public bidding or prevailing wage.

Sean Mangano responded that any type of construction would require prevailing wage, need to follow all the procurement rules that are normally followed.

John Hornik, mentioned that under “Housing” in the presentation there are two bullets, 1. To expand housing stock, 2. To work collaboratively with the Housing Trust to develop housing assistance programs. He pointed out that both are open-ended and inquired whether that means the Town is looking for the Housing Trust to flesh out or provide more detail on those general points.

Sean Mangano answered that some of the sections are specific and some are really broad and those that are broad are intentionally left so because they are big issues that require more planning and collaboration with the Trust to develop a specific program.

John Hornik mentioned that the Trust submitted 7-8 ideas related to both housing and homelessness and they kind of look like they’re represented in this presentation.

Sean Mangano added that they wrote the sections broadly to ensure none of those ideas were impossible based on what has been planned in the presentation. They left them intentionally vague so as to allow for more planning. He mentioned the idea for retrofitting apartments and said the idea is great, but it’s a large program and would require more thought on how to structure it, who to work with, all of which requires more planning time.

John Hornik asked if Sean would like the Trust to write something further about its ideas.

Sean Mangano suggested looking at how the funds have been earmarked and figuring out what program/initiative ideas they Trust would prioritize. He mentioned that the meeting to finalize would be November 15<sup>th</sup> and that the Trust could submit its priorities by the 11<sup>th</sup>.

John Hornik suggested that next steps for the Trust would be to write out more in terms of description for each program proposal and to think more about the budget that might be allocated to each element.

Sean Mangano offered assistance in helping determine what would be eligible/ineligible for ARPA usage and said he believed all of the program proposals put forward by the Trust seemed to fit eligibility. He mentioned that ARPA fund use is context specific and for some categories the Town has to provide proof that it is spending it on the hardest hit communities. Money spent in Qualified Census Tracts prequalifies money as eligible. If spent outside of a Qualified Census Tract, then the Town must submit an alternative rationale for how the funds are being used in an appropriate way. He mentioned Amherst lost a Qualified Census Tract between 2021 and 2022.

Nate Malloy asked, in regard to affordable housing, if the town wanted to give money to a developer would it be eligible, and would they have to RFP it.

Sean Mangano affirmed the need for an RFP, but that that did not mean it was ineligible for funds.

Nate Malloy said that it is difficult to increase the stock of affordable housing without building new units or preserving units, which would require paying funds to an outside agency.

John Hornik brought up that historically when developing homeowner units there seems to be a requirement for a deed restriction that runs against the goal of allowing people to accumulate wealth, particularly with CPA funds. He asked if this is an issue with ARPA funds.

Nate Malloy added that typically with CPA funds there is a permanent restriction or a resale provision to give the money back to the town so they don't earn any equity even as a homeowner.

Sean Mangano said he would have to look further but has not seen any such restrictions with ARPA funds. He added that if the Town is spending the money under the criteria of affordable housing, is there a way to ensure that ten years from now it is still affordable housing.

Carol Lewis added that there are ways to write restrictions that share any appreciation in value between the homeowner and the town getting the grant money back.

Sean responded that the Town does not want the grant money back because if the Town is getting the grant money back it likely has to go back to the federal government.

Carol Lewis mentioned the affordable housing section on the presentation mentions "increase the affordable housing stock" and that programs like retrofitting units to make them more affordable is not going to increase the stock, but that it is important. She does not know where it would fit within the current allocations. She added that a lot of the things that would increase housing stock might take too long to be actually spent by the time required.

Sean Mangano said that program could fall under the housing assistance section.

John Hornik added that if they could get the landlord to share the savings with the renter so that rent was decreased, that would increase affordable housing stock.

Nate Malloy pointed to the range of needs in affordable housing, whether it be homeownership programs or rental programs, and that the Trust needs to be realistic in the number of programs it chooses to prioritize.

John Hornik share the Trust's list of ARPA fund ideas and suggested the possibility of narrowing them and identifying individual members of the trust to do a little bit more research on each selected: 1. How to describe each initiative, 2. What the budget might be:

**a. Weatherization and Retrofitting heating systems for affordable housing units**

[ John Hornik offered to write more about this and mentioned that it would not be the extent of what the Trust would be interested in doing, but perhaps could use \$500,000 or less for it]

**b. Purchase of the University Motor Lodge for affordable housing**

**c. Purchase of site for permanent year-round shelter**

[Allegra Clark offered to do follow up with Craig's doors on the issues of b. and c. and potentially working with **Kevin Noonan?** to write something up]

**d. Mortgage subsidies/grants for first time home buyers**

[Erica Piedade offered to work with Donna Cabana to expand upon this item]

**e. Purchase property or construction of affordable housing for homeownership opportunities**

[Carol Lewis offered to work on this item with help from Laura Baker]

Nate Malloy inquired that if a developer were to be involved in item e., if ARPA funding would be eligible.

Sean Mangano stated that he believed if that project would not happen without ARPA funds, then funds could be used in that way.

Carol Lewis asked if the ARPA funds were used to either buy the property or be allocated for something in the early stages of the project even though the project hasn't been completed, would that qualify as being spent before 2026.

Sean Mangano said he was not sure but thought it would be ok.

Nate Malloy asked whether ARPA fund usage had to be framed in terms of impact from COVID.

Sean Mangano responded that for some things, yes. Affordable housing is one example where COVID made the problem worse, so it is an allowable initiative.

**f. Homeownership funding to maintain/stay in property**

[No one was assigned to this proposal]

**g. Racial equity in housing and programs to support diversity of residents in above. Used as guidelines and to prioritize program.**

John Hornik explained that g. was not a specific program but rather a goal incorporated into all the other proposals.

Erica Piedade asked if in terms of writing about each proposal they should be using the COVID-19 lens.

Sean Mangano offered to send the language from the interim rule so the Trust can see what the intent was in order to guide the description of these programs. He also mentioned that the Trust should keep in mind, like State Rep Mindy Domb advised, that the state has a lot of ARPA funds as well and have not yet come out with their plan on how they intend to allocate those funds. So, the town wants to focus on the things that may not have state funding. He suggested that there will likely be housing programs that get funding from the state as well.

**4. DISCUSSION OF FY2023 CPA HOUSING PROPOSALS**

**A. TRUST PROPOSALS**

John Hornik explained that the Trust is asking for \$500,000 in CPA funds to be allocated to the Trust for future projects without specific mention of what those projects will be as well as \$30,000 in support of consulting services over two years.

Nate Malloy added that as always there is more money requested of CPA than is available, so CPA Committee will need to make decisions.

John Hornik responded that there are two town proposals, one for \$500,000 for support of transitional housing and \$100,000 for support of new part time staff.

**B. TOWN OF AMHERST PROPOSALS**

David Ziomek mentioned that although the current focus has been on finding a congregate shelter and supporting Craig's Doors, the committee on homelessness will be convening again.

He mentioned that the Town put in two CPA proposals,

1. \$100,000 to establish a part time housing coordinator position within the planning department for 3 years. He said this position would be about capacity-building. He mentioned the success working with the Trust over the past year on the Belchertown Road project. The planning board concluded they needed someone to work with Nate Malloy and David Ziomek and to support the work of the Trust to ramp up efforts in affordable housing.

He mentioned the Town Council approved their comprehensive housing policy for the town and that the goals and timelines are aggressive, which sets the bar high and is thus an impetus for bringing some of that energy into the building. He added that he did not think this would compete with

the Trust's proposal for consulting support, but would rather complement and supplement the work that Rita Farrell does for the Trust.

2. \$500,000 for help support Craig's Doors in establishment of transitional housing. David mentioned this is beyond the mission of Craig's Doors and that supportive housing is a missing piece. The \$500,000 would be used as seed money to look at a property or multiple properties that might serve two functions, a modest congregate shelter the other being long-term supportive transitional housing. This might include looking at the University Motor Lodge as well as other properties in Amherst. It might mean acquiring a property or building new.

John Hornik pointed out potential problems in the proposal to CPAC. First, he mentioned that he believed CPA funds can only be used for permanent affordable housing, not for transitional housing.

David Ziomek acknowledged and said that there would be clarification before going in front of CPA.

John Hornik also added that the Trust and Town proposals were in direct competition. He first pointed to losing the valued time of Nate Malloy to the town's requirement that he spend time on zoning proposals. He expressed worry that bringing in a new housing coordinator would result in a continued attrition of Nate's time in the Trust.

David Ziomek responded that he did not see the position as a net loss, but rather a net gain. He noted that numerous communities are using part-time or full-time housing coordinators in planning departments. More staff time can only be a plus.

John Hornik assured that he agreed with that and just wanted assurance that it will not be an opportunity to ask Nate to do more on zoning.

David Ziomek assured that is not the intent at all. He also mentioned that zoning for 2022 will be decided by Town Council and that a lot of zoning is about housing so it is hard to tease the goal apart. Inclusionary zoning and adding to the affordable housing stock have benefits for affordability.

Nate Malloy agreed that he saw the housing coordinator position as helping. Administering CPA housing activities takes time so having help with that would allow for the extension of capacity for other projects.

John Hornik raised another area of concern, which is the lack of mention of the coordination between the Town and the Housing Trust in either of the Town's proposals to CPAC. He mentioned that there were elements of the proposal that raised the question of whether the Town values the Housing Trust. He raised concern that the message to CPAC was that the Trust and its consultant weren't as necessary as they have been in the past.

David Ziomek responded that he needed to revisit the proposal but that he thought that Rita Farrell [the Trust's consultant] brings a different service than a housing coordinator would bring to the Town. That they are complementary and not competing positions. He also mentioned the fact that he does not know how long Rita would be available to consult with the Trust and thus his job is to build capacity within the town to continue the good work for many years to come. It is hard to build capacity when consultants can come and go. So building capacity within the town is essential.

John Hornik expressed his agreement with these statements, but also reiterated concern about the way in which it was expressed to CPAC, which seems to potentially undermine the value of the Trust and the value of their consultant.

David Ziomek responded by saying that with all the conversation about the necessity of affordable housing Amherst has had over the years, there should be a full-time position. He mentioned the need to go before CPAC and say there is a need for Rita Farrell at the Trust as well as this part-time position, with the potential to come back and request a full-time position for a housing coordinator.

John Hornik agreed and added that he received a list of questions from Sonia Aldrich from CPAC asking why the Trust doesn't just replace the consultant with a full-time town employee.

David Ziomek responded that he thought they should get together and make sure responses to that are in sync. He mentioned that the Town and the Trust can convene before they present the proposals to CPAC.

Carol Lewis raised concern about the efficacy of creating a position based on CPA funding, which means the position is not guaranteed.

David Ziomek responded that municipalities fund positions like this from CPA and CDBG funds all the time. The goal being that if they could show how valuable a part-time staff person could be, they could go back and request more years of funding.

## **5. DISCUSSION OF 'TOWN CALL FOR IDEAS' FOR HICKORY RIDGE**

John Hornik stated that it appeared the town would close on Hickory Ridge in 1-2 months. The town has held multiple on-site events and a space for public comment through [Engage Amherst](#). Many of the comments have to do with affordable housing.

David Ziomek added that the Town held three information sessions called 'Discover Hickory Ridge' with over 200 attendants. There are plans to do outreach to the neighborhoods to the North. He reported that there will be 26 acres of solar out of 150 total acres. This will result in \$50,000-\$60,000 a year to the town as a PILOT payment. As part of the project the state is requiring the solar company to mitigate for impacts, which means 17 acres along the Fort River will be permanently protected. He mentioned that a Master



Plan would take 8-12 months to complete and that the Housing Trust and Conservation Commission as well as other boards and committees involved as it moves forward.

Erica Piedade mentioned that access to the lot seems to be mostly on Pomeroy Lane and that will be a factor in deciding use.

David Ziomek confirmed that any ideas for usage would have to happen South of the river near the former clubhouse. He mentioned the planning board looked at the site for DPW and a fire station, and it was deemed not appropriate for either.

Erica Piedade asked if all the comments on Engage Amherst in support of affordable housing weigh into decisions on priorities for use.

David Ziomek said it will likely be more of a planning process. The planning department will be going to the Trust and other boards and communities to get more specific input. Winter of 2022 will be the time to do that.

John Hornik proposed that the Trust begin writing a brief description of what it would mean to put an affordable housing development for older adults on that site.

David Ziomek added that if the Trust does arrive at a very specific population, that that decision be well researched and to explain where that idea comes from.

John Hornik proposed that he and Lucya Turowski begin writing up a proposal to share with the Trust in advance of the next meeting.

- **VOTE: JOHN HORNIK AND LUCYA TUROWSKI TO DRAFT AN INITIAL PROPOSAL FOR THE USE OF HICKORY RIDGE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR OLDER ADULTS**

**Motion:** John Hornik

**Second:** Erica Piedade

**Passed unanimously:** [Allegra Clark- Y, Sidonio Ferreira-Y, John Hornik-Y, Carol Lewis-Y, Erica Piedade-Y, Will Van Heuvelen-Y,]

John Hornik inquired if there were anything anyone would like to see in the draft.

Erica Piedade brought up mixed-generation housing and that funding may be difficult but suggested maybe ARPA funding could be used.

Carol Lewis agreed with Erica Piedade about the interest in creating mixed-generation housing.

## **6. DISCUSSION OF SURVEY FOR OLDER ADULTS**

John Hornik shared that Amherst has applied to become a 'dementia friendly community.' The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is working with towns who have volunteered to do this in order to assess what they need to have in order to qualify. This includes a survey of older adults. Maureen Pollock in the planning department will be taking the lead on the survey. He expressed interest in desire to assess the number of older adults that are seeking affordable housing, to estimate the number of older adults looking to downsize as well as to estimate the number of older adults who need assistance to remain in their current homes. He mentioned that the plan for PVPC is to conduct the survey using a convenient sample. He added that he would additionally like to see a random sample of perhaps 100 conducted by the Trust potentially in partnership with the university.

Nate Malloy inquired whether John meant he intended to use the survey that has already been developed by PVPC and just using it to do a random sample.

John Hornik confirmed that that was the intention.

Nate Malloy asked if John was envisioning using town records to draw the sample.

John Hornik confirmed that that was the intention.

Carol Lewis added that she was concerned that with a convenient sample there will not be many BIPOC people surveyed.

Erica Piedade share the [Town of West Springfield's Age and Dementia Friendly Report](#). She added that this document has some good definitions and examples of what a dementia friendly town means.

Nate Malloy added that perhaps 100 is too low and efforts for 150 or 200 might be better.

John Hornik answered that it depends on how much stratification they intend to do. He additionally mentioned it may be a challenge to the Trust's resources. He acknowledged a sample of 100 would not do much to remediate potentially missing on BIPOC representation because the BIPOC population of older adults is probably 15-20% so there would be a relatively small sample. The only solution would be a strategy of over-sampling in either the convenience or random sample.

Carol Lewis added that she was still unsure about the exact reason for doing it.

John Hornik clarified: to know the number of older adults who are seeking affordable housing in Amherst, including information on the number of older adults looking to downsize, as well as estimating the number of older adults who may need help staying in their current home.

Carol Lewis asked what the dementia aspect of the survey has to do with affordable housing. She said the questions just mentioned by John should be known by the Trust and if this survey is a way to get that information, then yes, the Trust should work with it.

- **VOTE: FOR THE TRUST TO USE THE PVPC SURVEY FOR A RANDOM SAMPLE TO GAIN INSIGHTS ON THE HOUSING NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS**

**Move:** John Hornik

**Second:** Erica Piedade

**Passed unanimously:** [Allegra Clark- Y, Sidonio Ferreira-Y, John Hornik-Y, Carol Lewis-Y, Erica Piedade-Y, Will Van Heuvelen-Y,]

## **7. UPDATES**

### **A. EAST STREET-BELCHERTOWN ROAD RFP**

John Hornik explained that the Town organized a meeting of people interested in bidding on RFP for East Street-Belchertown Road project. Home City Housing, Valley Community Development and Wayfinders were the interested parties.

Nate Malloy added that there is a potential fourth entity, an architect. He said there were a lot of interesting questions about keeping the school building, questions about the capacity of the site because there are wetlands on both sites. He mentioned the East Street School has more neighbors that may have more questions about a project, which may mean the need for advocacy or outreach. There are still a few more weeks for questions and proposals are due November 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **B. TOWN COUNCIL APPROVED COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING POLICY**

John Hornik suggested the Trust look at it and establish what the Trust is doing or planning to do that is consistent with the policy and to see if there is anything else to pull out of it that the Trust sees itself doing. He requested that everyone look at it for the next Trust Meeting.

### **C. STRONG STREET ASSESSMENT**

Nate Malloy reported that it is going a little slow and he is still waiting to hear from some consultants. Some of the neighbors have reached out to the Town and David Ziomek expressed interest in meeting with them to address concerns. He added that the thought is to run utilities to the site and it would be difficult for well and septic. He said he has talked to Habitat and a few other entities and they have asked if the Town would be willing to pay for utility costs and do the site work

John Hornik mentioned that once they know what is necessary it could be a potential use for ARPA funds assuming that the plan is homeownership on the site.

#### **D. SHELTER SEASON BEGINS NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>**

John Hornik stated that the University Motor Lodge will be in use by Craig's Doors and that they were also negotiating with a congregation in town for a congregate shelter.

Nate Malloy added that the shelter may not open on the 1<sup>st</sup>, it may be a little delayed. He said there will be some shuffling around and is unsure about whether meals, showers, lodging can all happen all at one location. He suggested ARPA funds for transitional housing is very important to find a more permanent solution.

John Hornik announced that the next Trust meeting was November 11<sup>th</sup> and Nate Malloy pointed out that it was Veteran's Day so they couldn't meet that day.

The Trust agreed to switch the meeting to Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup>.

Nate Malloy added that the write-ups about each of the Trust's ARPA fund proposals does not have to be a long narrative.

John Hornik stated to keep each to a page or two.

**E. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**F. ITEMS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS:** None.

#### **G. UPCOMING MEETINGS:**

**A.** Housing Coalition, October 26th

**B.** Housing Trust, November 4th

Meeting adjourned: 9:10