



AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, March 10, 2022, 7:00 PM

Virtual Zoom meeting <https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/81933913197>

IN ATTENDANCE

Trust Members: Allegra Clark, Robert Crowner, John Hornik, Sidonio Ferreira, Carol Lewis, Erica Piedade

Absent: Paul Bockelman

Staff: Nate Malloy

Guests: Laura Baker, Maura Keene, George Ryan, David Ziomek. **MISSING?**

Prepared by John Hornik

Meeting called to order at 7:04

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Paul is recommending the appointment of two persons to vacant Housing Trust positions. Their appointments will be through June, and then they will be reappointed to full terms.

- Risha Hess: Ms. Hess recently returned to Amherst, where she grew up. Ms. Hess has been a public health communication consultant for over twenty years, with most of her time spent doing work overseas. She is passionate about affordable housing, public health, and social justice. She has direct experience in finding housing in an expensive rental market and with individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Aschleigh Jensen: Ms. Jensen stated that she would bring the perspective as a person living in the community as a person of color. She is a therapist and social worker whose clientele includes very low income and unhoused individuals. She is very interested in housing policy and is working toward a Master's in Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts. Her interest is in helping people navigate the sometimes baffling process of finding subsidized housing, a process she had to discover on her own.

Lucya Turoski has resigned from her position as administrative/research assistant.

- ### 2. REVIEW MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS – None available. Minutes for January, February and March should be available prior to April meeting.

3. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR EAST GABLES (aka 132 Northampton Road)

Laura Baker, Real Estate Manager of Valley Community Development was present to briefly present her organization's request for an additional \$100,000 in Housing Trust funding to support construction of the 28-unit development at 132 Northampton Road. Construction is planned to begin late in March, 2022, and will take about 14 months to complete.

Laura spoke briefly about unanticipated rising costs, not only for Valley's project, but for most if not all projects previously approved by DHCD. That agency was asking all developers to go back to relevant towns to request increased subsidies before they would go forward and approve requests from their own coffers. Valley will also be contributing \$25,000 from its development fee.

Valley's earlier estimates and approved total costs were \$9 million. The current revised estimate is \$9.9 million. If the Housing Trust approves this request, the total in funds from the Town to support this project (about \$850,000) will still be less than 10% of total costs, a rate that is consistent with past support for affordable housing development.

The Housing Trust members voted 6-0 to authorize this expenditure from available funds.

Laura also reported that Valley Community Development is working on a potential homeownership project elsewhere in Amherst. They are currently doing "due diligence" evaluations of the property. If all goes well, there should be an announcement in about a year.

4. DISCUSSION OF ARPA FUNDING WITH ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER

John briefly described requests that the Housing Trust has made for expenditure if ARPA fund on projects addressing homelessness and housing, asked what the status of those requests are, and what the process for making decisions would be going forward.

Dave Ziomek reported that the Town was going forward with employing "due diligence" funds provided by the Housing Trust to evaluate a property that might provide both a permanent shelter and affordable rental housing. He indicated that the Town is committed to finding a permanent shelter. He also said the possible purchase of the University Motor Lodge was under consideration since it has worked successfully was part of the shelter system in Amherst.

Dave said that he personally favors development of new units over a program that would improve the heating and air quality of existing units. When asked about homeownership, he is hoping that the development of Town property off Strong Street would provide that opportunity.

Nate reported that he and Rob Morra (Amherst Building Commissioner) have been looking carefully at what is possible there, given site constraints including the steepness of the site in some places and wildlife habitat on the eastern slope. They believe that the site could

support 12-16 units of new housing, possibly duplexes. Additional work needs to be completed before a plan for the property can be developed. A roadway and water, sewer and other utilities must also be brought into the site from Strong Street. It is possible that the Town could take these steps itself before offering the site to a developer. This could be supported by ARPA or CDBG funding.

The Town will be closing on Hickory Ridge in the near future, and the Town Planning Department will be developing a master plan for the property that could include development of senior housing on the six or more acres that would support a building project.

Dave promised to return in two months for the Trust's May meeting to report on progress in ARPA planning.

5. UPDATES AND DISCUSSIONS ON:

a. AGE AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY SURVEY (John)

John reported that there has been an outstanding response to first wave, of mailed survey: 500 surveys sent to a random sample of Amherst residents, 100-125 returned thus far; awaiting authorization from Town hall to do the planned second wave mailing ASAP. In all we could get a 40-50% response rate.

Only one Spanish-language survey returned in the first wave. Overall an estimated 8% of returned survey are from members of the Amherst BIPOC community. Anticipating that, Sid and John have initiated an outreach effort to Communities of Color in Amherst., asking individuals whom they know to ask others to do further outreach. We hope to receive 50-100 surveys through this strategy.

b. REVIEW OF PROPOSALS FOR EAST STREET/BELCHERTOWN ROAD – Review Committee concluded its work about two weeks. We are awaiting Town Manager's final decision on contractor selection, which is expected to come in a few days.

c. TOWN COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING POLICY – A paper outlining Housing Trust priorities submitted to Town Council and acknowledge by both Lynn Griesemer and Mandy Jo Haneke. This will also influence recommendations from the Planning Department to Town Council.

6. TWO HOUSING TRUST MEMBERS HAVE TERMS EXPIRING IN JUNE

John recommended that Allegra Clark be reappointed for a second term

John himself has served six years on Housing Trust and five to six years on the predecessor Housing and Sheltering Committee. He indicated that it is time for new person to take over.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

8. ITEMS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS - none

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Housing Trust, April 14