

AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
Thursday, October 22, 2015
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Attendance

Jan Dizard, Tom Kegelman, Connie Kruger, Jeff De Santis, TracyLee Boutilier (7:29 pm)
Absent: Caroline Murray, John Coull

Guests: Nate Malloy

Announcements

Staff told the Trust that two affordable units will soon be up for resale: Canterbury Lane and Palley Village; both home ownership units.

Minutes

Minutes of August 13, 2015 were reviewed and approved with minor corrections. Vote 4-0 to approve minutes.

Review comments from Sept 30th housing forum

The Trust thought there was a good representation of organizations and very useful information shared at the stations and panel. It was beneficial to have a range of perspectives on housing from social services to veterans to affordable housing developers.

One take away was that there still needs to be more public outreach to educate residents about the need for housing (for many income levels) and the challenges of financing and constructing affordable housing.

Many of the organizations noted that Amherst still needs more student housing on or near campus, as well as affordable units in the village centers.

The Trust said it would like this to become a recurring event that brings various organizations and people together to talk about housing.

FY2017 CPA Call for Proposals

Members discussed whether they would support a request for funding. Other trusts have a standing request with their CPA Committee for a set amount or percentage while others submit requests for specific projects. It is important for Trusts to capitalize and have funds available to be able to implement goals. A benefit of a trust is that it can act throughout the year and does not necessarily need a vote by Town Meeting.

The reality is that one needs to act fast when dealing with property and property transfers or negotiations.

Staff said that the Interfaith Housing may be looking to divest some of their funds and would be interested in the Trust. A possible condition of the funding would be an equal match by the recipient.

Roles of Trust

Members talked about the demand for affordable housing (who needs housing) and the supply (who can build it). Amherst's housing needs are generated internally and regionally, and there is a high need for housing at this time.

Members discussed reorganizing goals, with #2 including the identification of need and existing resources and #4 listing action steps.

Members discussed specific action steps such as the small house movement that could be effective at generating affordable apartments as well as supportive housing (enhanced SRO's).

The Trust asked itself if a goal should be to take part in policy and zoning. It was also asked if the Trust would undertake more public advocacy. Members agreed that the Trust could be flexible with respect to these goals and suggested that goal #6 could be updated with language that includes the "Trust to advocate for innovative and new forms and types of housing through regulations and policy".

Consultant and attorney Selection

The Trust would like Attorney O'Donnell to attend the November/December meeting to discuss its legal framework and draft the legal documents. The cost should be kept to \$500 or so.

Staff said that the Massachusetts Housing Partnership will soon be publishing a second guidebook for Municipal Housing Trusts that focuses on implementation.

The Trust would like to have the consultant under contract as soon as possible with a completion date of July 1, 2016. The consultant could come to the December meeting.

Town Surplus Property

Members talked about the possibility of using the East Street School property—including the playing field—for housing. Tom said that he spoke with interim Town Manager Dave Ziomek who said that staff will complete an internal review as part of a feasibility study about the future of the property.

Members said they wanted to be realistic about the costs of rehabilitating the building, especially if the Town did not pursue it for LSSE.

The Trust agreed that they want to be effective looking at parcels and not spend a lot of money with preliminary assessments. Can move incrementally with a standard set of criteria and only bring in professional consultants (architects, engineers, etc.) after a property has met certain criteria.

Public Outreach

Members said the Trust needs to send literature and information out into the community, and to have an active website. The Trust should also have open communication between other agencies and organizations.

Next Meetings

November 18

December 10

Adjournment

8:47 p.m.