

Groton Affordable Housing Trust
Minutes of Meeting
September 8, 2010
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Staff Room

A regular meeting of the Groton Affordable Housing Trust was held at 6:00 PM on Wednesday September 8, 2010 in the 2nd Floor Staff Room located at 173 Main Street Groton, MA 01450.

Members present were Colleen Neff, Allen King, and Stuart Schulman. Also present were Mark Haddad, Town Manager, Carolyn Fischer, Housing Coordinator, and David Wilder.

Member absent was Joshua Degen.

A quorum was attained. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

Welcome/Introductions

Town Manager Mark Haddad welcomed the Affordable Housing Trust members (the "Trust") and described how the Trust was adopted through a Town Meeting Warrant Article to accept the provisions of M.G.L. c. 44, s. 55C.

Nomination and Designation of Officers

Mark Haddad suggested that the Trust organize and elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Clerk.

Carolyn Fischer provided proposed responsibilities for each officer position for those unfamiliar with general responsibilities on Town Boards. A copy of the position descriptions is provided with the minutes filed with the Town Clerk.

Stuart Schulman nominated Colleen Neff as Chair. Motion was seconded by Allen King. Vote was unanimous.

Stuart Schulman nominated Allen King as Vice Chair. Motion was seconded by Colleen Neff. Vote was unanimous.

Allen King nominated Stuart Schulman as Treasurer. Motion seconded by Colleen Neff. Vote was unanimous.

Stuart Schulman nominated Joshua Degen as Secretary. Motion seconded by Allen King. Vote was unanimous.

Review and Discussion of Housing Trust

A copy of the Declaration of Trust was distributed to all Trustees. Mark Haddad proposed the Board review the Declaration of Trust, focusing specifically on the Powers of the Trust and considering if they would like to maintain approval by the Board of Selectmen in order to borrow money, or mortgage or pledge Trust assets, purchase, sell, lease, exchange, transfer, or convey any interest in real property.

Allen King did not feel he had enough knowledge of the functions of the Trust presently to make any decisions on this matter tonight.

Stuart Schulman added, in comparison to other boards in town that serve a similar function, that the Trust is closely aligned to Conservation Commission rather than Conservation Trust. Schulman was not sure that it is necessary to change the controls granted to the Board of Selectmen over the Trust.

Mark Haddad added that if the Powers of the Trust that currently require Board of Selectmen approval no longer require Board of Selectmen approval, the Trust would still be regulated by M.G.L. c. 44, s. 55C.

The Trustees decided to table this matter and consider the implications of maintaining Board of Selectmen approval and continue discussion at the next meeting and make a decision at that time.

Stuart Schulman requested clarification on the general financial operations.

Carolyn Fischer explained that it will be maintained in line with the Town warrant system and directed the Trustees to Article 8, General Financial Operations for further clarification and explanation of financial procedures.

Colleen Neff requested clarification regarding Article 9, Liability in the Declaration of Trust as there were sections of Massachusetts General Law that were referenced, but not explained.

Carolyn Fischer agreed to put together a booklet of all MGL referenced within the Declaration of Trust that would be available for the Board's review. Carolyn Fischer stated that if there were any additional questions to please direct them to her attention so that they can be discussed at the next Housing Trust Fund meeting.

Housing Needs and Action Plan

Carolyn Fischer requested that the board brainstorm potential projects to be undertaken by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Stuart Schulman brought up that seed money would need to be obtained, likely through the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

Carolyn Fischer agreed to request the 2011 deadlines to obtain CPC funding and the dollar amount available to designated affordable housing activities.

Stuart Schulman proposed exploring a mortgage buy down program considering the unusually low housing prices available in the current housing market. He suggested looking into available units at Groton Residential Gardens, a 40B project.

David Wilder thought the Housing Trust may be able to partner with local banks in order to obtain foreclosed homes. He added that banks may be able to contribute towards their Community Reinvestment Act points by working with the Town on a buy-down program. Both David Wilder and Allen King have access to the Warren Group and should be able to obtain up-to-date information on foreclosed properties and properties in the foreclosure pipeline.

Stuart Schulman asked to what specificity a program would need to be developed in order to gain CPC funding. For example, would a property need to be identified for acquisition or could a basic program be outlined.

Carolyn Fischer stated she was familiar with requests for funding from CPC in other towns and guidelines for a buy-down program were sufficient to achieve funding; however, she would look into the matter for the next meeting.

Carolyn Fischer provided a hand out giving an overview of housing goals and affordable housing activities in Groton (On file with Town Clerk), and provided a brief summary of the document.

Meeting of the Trust

The board discussed meeting times and chose to hold the next meeting on October 13, 2010 at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Carolyn Fischer, Housing Coordinator
Groton Affordable Housing Trust
11/16/2010

Supporting Documents

- Responsibilities of the Chairman:
 - With input from the Trustees, set the agenda for and preside at all meetings of the Board. In doing so, he/she shall maintain order in the meeting room, recognize speakers, call for votes and preside over the discussion of agenda items. The agenda shall include an opportunity for public comment.
 - Sign official documents that require the signature of the Chairman, as authorized by the majority vote of the Trustees.
 - Call special meetings in accordance with the Open Meeting Law
 - Represent positions approved by a majority of the Trustees at meetings, conferences, and other gatherings unless otherwise determined by the Board or delegated by the Chairman.
 - The Chairman shall have the same rights as other members to offer motions and resolutions, to discuss questions and to vote thereon.
- Responsibilities of the Vice Chairman:
 - The Vice-Chairman of the Board shall act in the place of the Chairman during his/her absence at meetings. Should the chairman leave office, the Vice-Chairman shall assume the duties of Chairman until the Board elects a new Chairman.
- Responsibilities of the Treasurer:
 - The Treasurer shall be responsible for maintaining the financial records of the Trust, for managing Trust funds, paying invoices approved for payment by the Trustees, and filing state and federal tax returns. The Treasurer shall also be responsible for assuring completion of an annual audit.
- Responsibilities of the Secretary:
 - The Secretary shall take the minutes of Trust meetings. Minutes shall contain full statement of actions taken by the Trustees and of the disposition of all proposals for action. Approved minutes shall be kept in a Minutes Book and filed with the Town Clerk. Minutes of Executive Sessions shall be separately kept and recorded with the above procedures. Minutes (other than of executive session) are open for public inspection.
 - The Secretary shall also be responsible for preparation of an annual report to be submitted, upon approval by the majority of the Trustees, to the Board of Selectmen for inclusion in the Town's Annual Report.

Overview of Affordable Housing in Groton

Affordable housing in Groton has been created through both local zoning bylaws and comprehensive permits, also known as 40B. A diverse range of affordable housing options have been created in town including 54 elderly rental units, 74 units in an assisted living facility, 40 family rental units, and 25 condominium units. Two additional projects, Academy Hill and Squannacook Hills, will create an additional 15 affordable home ownership units. Currently, with affordable ownership units still on the market at Groton Residential Gardens and additional units becoming available in the coming months there is not a great need for additional ownership units. However, as indicated by the Groton Housing Authority long waiting lists and low-proportion of rental opportunities in town evidenced by US Census data demonstrate a need for additional affordable rental options.

Groton Master Plan: Housing Objectives

- To protect the overall character of the three villages
- To provide housing for Groton retirees and elders by ensuring that a range of housing types is available
- To avoid the creation of isolated projects or areas of affordable housing by integrating them into new market rate developments
- To plan for housing that meets the special needs of residents (health needs, location needs or scale needs.)
- To work to keep the homes that are affordable today, affordable in the future
- To facilitate the rehabilitation of existing housing stock
- To encourage conversion of large, older homes into multiple units to provide affordable, rental housing
- To support the efforts of the Groton Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership to provide low and moderate income housing.
- To provide the information on the current needs and options available to builders and homeowners to provide less costly housing.
- To encourage and require that housing development be designed so as to fit within the environment rather than overpower the environment

Objectives of Groton Housing Production Plan

- Affordable housing should meet the objectives of the Master Plan.
- Affordable housing should be located to take advantage of town services to the greatest extent possible. Town services include water, sewer, and proximity, to recreational facilities and schools.
- When possible, priority for affordable housing will be given to town employees, current and former residents, and veterans.
- In order to not increase the overall residential growth of the town, the recycling of older buildings will be encouraged to meet the State's mandate.
- Senior Housing should be encouraged for Groton's aging baby boomers.
- Provide housing for special needs and Groton's disabled community.

Development	Housing Type	Location	Total Units	Affordable Units
Brookfield Commons	condominiums	Brookfield Drive	34	8
Brookfield Commons	family-rental	Brookfield Drive	2	2
Petapawaug Place	elderly-rental	Lowell Road	20	20
Petapawaug Place	family-rental	Lowell Road	5	5
Groton Commons	elderly-rental	Willowdale Road	34	34
Winthrop Place	family-rental	Main Street	24	24
Meadow Brook	condominiums	Nashua Road	2	2
Rivercourt	assisted living	West Main St	74	74
Deer Haven	condominiums	Deerfield Drvie	2	2
Groton Residential Gardens	condominiums	Main & Mill St	44	11
Rocky Hill	rental	Sandy Pond Road (34,36,38)	84	9
Amandas Way	condominiums	Lowell Road	1	1
Total # Affordable Units on SHI:			241	192