

Groton Affordable Housing Trust
Minutes of Meeting
October 13, 2010
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Staff Room

A regular meeting of the Groton Affordable Housing Trust was held at 6:00 PM on Wednesday October 13, 2010 in the Small Meeting Room on the First Floor of Town Hall located at 173 Main Street Groton, MA 01450.

Members present were Colleen Neff, Allen King, David Wilder and Stuart Schulman. Also present was Carolyn Fischer, Housing Coordinator.

Member absent was Joshua Degen.

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

Idea Generation and Planning for Projects and Proposals

David Wilder began by commenting that after reviewing the overview of housing needs and activities provided at the Trustees meeting held September 8, 2010 that Groton is in need of more affordable rental housing opportunities rather than affordable homeownership opportunities. Wilder added that the Trust may want to explore the possibilities of financial and/or tax incentives that the Trust could promote to increase affordable housing.

Stuart Schulman responded to David Wilder's comment on the need for additional rental housing in Groton, by asking if the Trust wanted to function as a landlord.

Carolyn Fischer added that if the Trust were to pursue a project that involved rental units that additional research into working with the Groton Housing Authority and other management companies would be necessary.

Allen King asked if when the Trustees discussed a "buy-down" program if it was in reference to an interest rate buy-down or a subsidy that would be applied directly to the purchase price.

Carolyn Fischer responded that when referring to "buying-down" she was referring to applying a subsidy directly to the purchase price.

Stuart Schulman added that units at Groton Residential Gardens continue to be prime candidates for a buy-down program. Schulman was unsure how many units, both affordable and market rate remain available for purchase.

David Wilder requested someone look into how many units at Groton Residential Gardens remain unsold.

Carolyn Fischer agreed to look up how many units are still available at Groton Residential Gardens.

Stuart Schulman added that there are two 40B projects currently, one on Townsend Road which has already begun work and another on Oakridge which is going through the housing appeals process.

Allen King also mentioned that Habitat for Humanity is in the beginning stages of applying for a permit to construct an affordable unit on Saddle Lane. It is anticipated that 40B will be used in this case to receive a special permit.

Moving onto discussion of applying for Community Preservation Committee funding, Carolyn Fischer stated that \$376,380 was available in the housing bin of the CPC funds prior to the state match. If the Trust was interested in applying for funding a draft proposal would need to be submitted to the CPC by October 29, 2010. The proposal should be 1-2 pages in length and include the purpose for the funds being requested, a project timeline, name and contact information, and how the project would further the objectives of the CPC.

Carolyn Fischer brought up Tarbell School as a possible site for housing development on town-owned land. However, noted that there are challenges to development including concerns related to the septic and underground oil tank, need for roof replacement, flooding in the basement, and general code compliance. Further, two Requests for Proposals have been issued to re-use this site and no responses were received in either instance. Using a rough calculation about 9 one-bedroom units may fit into this area.

Stuart Schulman responded that it seems like pursuing re-development of Tarbell may be a larger project than the Trust is ready for at the moment. Schulman brought up the Prescott School as another possible location for affordable housing, but that is also in need of significant refurbishing.

David Wilder noted that the Prescott School could be appealing in the future once the Prescott School Reuse Committee finishes their study. Wilder also asked what sort of other funding is available besides CPC to support affordable housing development in town.

Stuart Schulman reinforced the need to identify other sources of funding available to develop affordable housing.

Carolyn Fischer agreed to put together a list of other sources of funding for the Trustees.

Discussion moved back to focus on a buy down program.

David Wilder noted that according to his bank contact it was possible for the Trust to receive a 5-10% discount on the purchase of a foreclosed home. Wilder also inquired whether sellers could get a tax break if they lowered the cost of their house to make it more affordable. Additional research into possibility of a tax break if a home was sold at below market value, as no one was sure if any such incentive exists.

Allen King mentioned that there is a house on Ames Street that is close to foreclosure. He wondered weather we could make it into a duplex. King also asked the group if there were any realtors in town we should consider talking to gain some insight into market conditions.

David Wilder reinforced King's interest in getting some information from local realtors. Wilder agreed to e-mail us a list of properties for sale in Groton that he would obtain from Ursula Graff, Realtor.

David Wilder questioned how far the \$376,380 available to fund housing activities would go in supporting a buy-down program and suggested that the Trustees consider exploring an interest rate buy-down approach as well.

Noting that it was nearly time to adjourn the meeting, Allen King motioned to apply for \$300,000 from the CPC to fund a "buy-down" program for affordable housing. The motion was seconded by Stuart Schulman.

Carolyn Fischer will complete the initial proposal to be submitted to the CPC.

Declaration of Trust

Allen King motioned that we strike "except that they shall have no ability to borrow money, or mortgage or pledge Trust assets, purchase, sell, lease, exchange, transfer, or convey any interest in real property without prior approval of the Groton Board of Selectmen" from Article 4 of the Declaration of Trust and David Wilder seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

The modification to the Declaration of the Housing Trust Fund will be presented to the Board of Selectmen prior to the next meeting of the Groton Affordable Housing Trust.

The next meeting of the Groton Affordable Housing Trust is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17th at 6:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

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