



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



Stuart M. Schulman, *Chair*
Sheila Julien, *Vice Chair*
David A. Wilder, *Treasurer*
Colleen A. Neff, *Member*
Joshua A. Degen, *Member*

Meeting Minutes
Regular Session

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2019
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton
Attending members: Stuart Schulman, Colleen Neff, David Wilder, Sheila Julien
Visitors: Ann Marie and Cory (expressed interest in moving to Groton)
Meeting handouts: Agenda, draft minutes from December 20, 2018

Stuart Schulman called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Agenda Item 1: Consider letter of support for funding application for housing coordinator position. Votes may be taken.

Stuart Schulman explained that he had been asked by the Land Use Director Takashi Tada to submit a letter of support for the Housing Coordinator CPC funding application. Trust members discussed and agreed by consensus to support this application with a letter.

Agenda Item 2: Consider follow up question from owner of 44 Farmers Row regarding Trust's interest in purchasing the property. Votes may be taken.

Fran Stanley explained that Mark Haddad has passed on to the housing trust an inquiry from the Lawrence Homestead Trust which owns 44 Farmers Row.¹ The Lawrence Homestead Trust representative asked whether the Town would be interested in purchasing this property for \$975,000.

The housing trust members discussed the offer and how the present buildings might be converted to affordable housing. The main appeal of this property for the housing trust is the possibility of converting apartments that were originally used as faculty housing to affordable rental units. It is challenging to find the funding to create rentals rather than homeownership units, but the greatest demand in housing is for rentals serving people with low incomes.

Besides the purchase price, the housing trust would need to spend money to bring the rentals up to code, especially in the areas of fire sprinklers and electrical. Even if the building could be purchased, refurbished, and transferred to the housing authority free of charge, it is unclear whether the affordable rents would be sufficient to cover the ongoing costs to maintain an historically appropriate exterior. The Groton Housing Authority receives limited funding from the Commonwealth so any new units would need to be self-sustaining. By consensus, the housing trust members concluded that they are not interested in purchasing the property at this price and at this time.

¹ The assessed value in 2017 for this property was \$1,108,200. The 35-acre site is under the Chapter 61A program. Approximately 30 acres remain in active farming and have a conservation restriction to preserve this use. The remaining 5 acres contains a large stately home. The property is within one of Groton's historic districts which will ensure that exteriors to the buildings on site are maintained in a way that is historically appropriate.

Agenda Item 3: Update on pending funding applications for a Housing Production Plan and the Country Club Affordable Housing Feasibility Study. Votes may be taken.

The housing trust members were briefly apprised of the status of the Housing Production Plan grant applications. The Town will hopefully receive a Montachusett Regional Planning Commission grant to do this work. If not, then the CPC funding application will go forward. Housing trust members expressed interest in participating in the planning for the new Housing Production Plan.

Trust members discussed the Country Club Affordable Housing Feasibility Study. Currently, a concept plan with 25 units has been produced for the Select Board. Fran Stanley described the Select Board's actions to investigate the site and their plans to appoint a committee to study a variety of development options. Individually, Trust members were not drawn to apply to join the new committee to study the County Club site.

A mixed income age restricted homeownership project there would bring affordable housing but not the low income affordable rental housing that is most needed. Anecdotally, Trust members have heard of a general need for housing that allows seniors to age in place. Trust members discussed the idea that if the Town goes forward with this project, then the Town will have a lot of control over the development since the Town owns the land. Therefore, an RFP or bidding process that preferences well designed units with garages, first floor bedrooms and other accessibility features will help ensure that the housing allows seniors to age in place.

Agenda Item 4: Review draft minutes from December 20, 2018 meeting. Votes may be taken.

Members reviewed draft minutes.

Stuart Schulman moved to approve and release the December 20, 2018 regular session minutes as submitted. Colleen Neff seconded and the motion carried 3:0 (Sheila Julien abstained; Joshua Degen absent).

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Next Housing Trust Meeting: Thursday, March 21, 2019

Other Meetings of Note:

March 7, 2019 Montachusett Regional Planning Commission decision on HPP grant

March 11, 2019 CPC deadline for final proposals

April 29, 2019 Spring Town Meeting

May 21, 2019 Annual Town Election

Minutes by Fran Stanley.