



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



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

Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, August 29, 2019
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton
Attending members: Colleen Neff, Sheila Julien, David Wilder, Becky Pine
Visitors: Judy Anderson
Meeting handout: Agenda, July 22, 2019 CPC letter, July 27, 2019 HPP Kick-off Notes, Feb. 27, 2019 draft minutes

Meeting called to order by Sheila Julien at 7:03 pm.

Reorganization. The group discussed its past practice of rotating positions by moving each person up one position and agreed by consensus that this would be an acceptable way to reorganize this year. Sheila Julien said that she does not plan to continue with the housing trust past June 30, 2020 and will retire from the Trust at that time. With that caveat, Sheila Julien agreed serve as Chair. David Wilder agreed serve as Vice Chair. Colleen Neff agreed serve as Treasurer. It was agreed that Stuart Schulman and Becky Pine will each serve as members.

David Wilder moved to approve the new slate of officers as discussed. Colleen Neff seconded and the motion carried 4:0 (Stuart Schulman absent).

Housing Production Plan ideas

During the Housing Production Plan kick off meeting, several local zoning changes were discussed in the areas of accessory dwelling units and multi-family housing. Sheila Julien clarified that the present accessory dwelling unit bylaw and potential changes are not intended to create affordable housing units that count on Groton's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). With that being the case, she said that she preferred to focus the work of the Trust on its main mission of creating SHI eligible affordable housing. Sheila Julien asked for copy of the Town's SHI in order to familiarize herself with those unit types and locations.

Becky Pine expressed interest in the price points for new market rate age restricted housing in David Moulton's development.

Fran Stanley mentioned the upcoming second Housing Production Plan meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 7 pm in front of the Planning Board.

DEP Zero Energy Modular Affordable Housing Initiative

Becky Pine found this unusual program. The Commonwealth is planning to sell ten (10) modular homes to individual households. The housing units should cost less than \$200,000 each. The complication is that buyers must supply their own lots. Given Groton's limited public utilities and the high cost of a buildable lot, trust members agreed that the program was unlikely to benefit the segment of income eligible households (up to 125% of the area median income) that the Trust is designed to help.

July 22, 2019 Letter from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Trust members spent the majority of the meeting discussing how it can best respond to the CPC invitation to attend a meeting and participate in a review of the Boynton Meadows project. See text of the letter below:

“Subject: FY2012 BOYNTON MEADOWS CPA PROJECT

Dear Chairman Schulman:

On behalf of the Groton Community Preservation Committee, I would like to extend an invitation for you to come meet with the Committee to have an informal discussion regarding the items below with respect to the Boynton Meadows CPA Project from FY2012.

As questions have been raised regarding the Boynton Meadows Project, we think a joint meeting to review the process involved in this project and to consider possible next steps would be beneficial and, in the Town’s, best interest.

If you have any documents or other information that would help facilitate this conversation please bring them to the meeting.

For the Affordable Housing Trust’s information, we have consulted with the Town Manager and he has indicated that there are no outstanding issues with reviewing this project at this time.

We usually meet on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7PM. Please let us know if there is a particular date that works well for you. We look forward to coming up with a mutually agreeable date.”

The group discussed the fact that the last commercial condominium unit in the development (lower level of 134 Main Street) has not been sold and so the project may still be ongoing. At the conclusion of the project, investor documents require Mount Laurel Development to conduct a full audit of the project and share that information with each of the investors. The composition of the Trust has changed somewhat over the years and there are a number of executive session minutes that have not yet been released to the public. However, the housing trust retained the right to describe its own position in the investment and it is also true that a number of documents and public statements have been made over the years about the Trust’s investment in Mount Laurel Development.

In the discussion, it was noted that the housing trust by its nature has a fiduciary relationship to the Town which is often understood as prudent stewardship of money and other assets. The Declaration of Trust describes numerous powers granted to the trustees to help accomplish the Trust’s purposes.

Judy Anderson observed that Bob France has been before the Planning Board this summer regarding plans to finish the asphalt for Blacksmith Way. Because Blacksmith Way is a private road, the Planning Board does not have the usual leverage of bonds to finish the road in the event of a default. The Town does have the leverage of whether to issue a certificate of occupancy for the lower level commercial condominium.

Considering the fact that certain statements and actions of the Trust could have legal implications for the housing trust and potentially affect the Trust’s investment, members agreed that it would be helpful to have the advice of Town Counsel on some of these matters. David Wilder volunteered to contact Stuart Schulman and that they would reach out to Mark Haddad (Town Manager) about using Town Counsel. David Wilder will tell Fran Stanley when he is ready for the next Trust meeting so that the housing trust can prepare its answer and/or remarks to the Community Preservation Committee.

In the meantime, Trust members will familiarize themselves with some of the history of the Trust’s investment as well as learning about Bob France’s recent interactions with the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. Judy Anderson recommended that Trust members might review executive session minutes to learn background information and see what can or not said in open meeting. The Trust will defer discussion of a new CPC funding application for the time being.

Minutes

Colleen Neff moved to approve the draft minutes from February 27, 2019. David Wilder seconded and the motion carried 3:0 (Becky Pine abstained and Stuart Schulman was absent).

Housing Trust members declined to consider the June 27, 2019 notes of the Housing Production Plan kick off meeting as minutes of the Affordable Housing Trust. A number of Trust members attended that meeting which was scheduled as a regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Board.

Colleen Neff announced plans to attend the Massachusetts Housing Partnership affordable housing trust training that will be held in Ayer on September 18, 2019.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Minutes by Fran Stanley.