



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



Becky Pine, *Chair*
David A. Wilder, *Vice Chair*
Cynthia Lane-Hand, *Member*
Colleen A. Neff, *Treasurer*
Stuart M. Schulman, *Member*

Regular Session

Date: Thursday, August 20, 2020

Time: 6:30 pm

Location: Virtual meeting to be held via Zoom pursuant to Governor's executive order concerning the Open Meeting Law

Trust members
in attendance: Becky Pine, Cynthia Lane-Hand, Colleen Neff, Dave Wilder, Stuart Schulman

Other
Attendees: Carolyn Perkins (Community Preservation Committee, Housing Partnership and Sign Committee)

Documents: Agenda, emergency rental assistance program documents

Colleen Neff called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Review emergency rental assistance program proposal in view of August 10, 2020 verbal feedback from the CPC. Votes may be taken.

Fran Stanley shared a synopsis of the CPC meeting on August 10th when the CPC reviewed the Trust's emergency rental assistance program. Various CPC members questioned:

- the duration of the program,
- retention of the unspent funds,
- request for robust reporting, and
- a suggestion to market the program through GELD mailing inserts (6 cents an insert with \$250 estimated total cost).

Stuart Schulman entered the meeting.

Becky Pine said that she watched the video of this meeting and the sticking point was the Trust's plan to retain unspent program funds. Becky Pine said that she thinks that this has to do with rebuilding trust with the CPC and with the community after the Boynton Meadows project. Trust members discussed changes and reviewed a draft list of program information that might be reported out.

Colleen Neff moved to approve the four discussed changes to the complete draft proposal for the emergency rental assistance program such that the new end date of the program will be June 30, 2022, the housing trust will not retain unspent funds, reporting of program data as discussed, and the program will be marketed through Groton Electric Light Department mailing inserts. Cynthia Lane-Hand seconded and the motion carried (4:0) by roll call vote: Becky Pine – aye, Colleen Neff – aye, Cynthia Lane-Hand – aye, Stuart Schulman – abstained and David Wilder -- aye.

Fran Stanley will make these changes and submit the Complete Final Proposal to the CPC on August 21, 2020. Fran Stanley will also seek out Town Counsel review of the program.

Consider any candidates for the upcoming housing trust vacancy. Votes may be taken.

David Wilder welcomed Carolyn Perkins to the housing trust. Becky Pine passed along her thanks to David Wilder for his service to the Trust from herself and the other members of the Trust. Becky Pine said that she was speaking with Joshua Degen recently, who was also a founding member of the Trust, and he commented that he could be invited back into a future executive session meeting.

Carolyn Perkins asked if this position needed to be posted since David Wilder's is a recent resignation (dated for August 21, 2020). Becky Pine said that the position has been advertised since January 2020, at first for Sheila Julien's position. Becky Pine said that the Trust can take a vote to recommend Carolyn Perkins' appointment and then check back in with Town Manager Mark Haddad on the process issue. Becky Pine said that the CPC discussed having a person with dual membership on the CPC and the Trust and that this is another reason to support Carolyn Perkins' candidacy. Carolyn Perkins then noted that this is an informal arrangement since she is an 'at large' member of the CPC and happens to be interested in joining the Trust to work on affordable housing.

Becky Pine observed that there was a prior candidate who later withdrew her name from consideration once she learned more about the role of the Trust within the town.

Becky Pine referenced an additional candidate who was one of the people displaced by the June 1 fire at Winthrop Place. This person is not eligible to be appointed to the Trust per Town Counsel because this person is no longer living in Groton. Becky Pine explained that the state enabling statute that Groton adopted has a narrow definition of residency as a requirement for Trust membership.

David Wilder noted that he plans to resign from the housing trust, effective tomorrow. Becky Pine added that when Carolyn Perkins' interest in joining the Affordable Housing Trust became known, then the Select Board placed an item on its August 24 agenda at 7 pm to consider her appointment.

Carolyn Perkins asked to be allowed to provide a brief statement regarding her interest and experience. Carolyn Perkins has lived in Groton since 1991. She has served on the Planning Board for thirty years so she knows how development occurs. In her career, she worked with the disabled who rented housing using Section 8 mobile vouchers issued by the Boston Housing Authority. She believes in diversity in housing. She said that it is helpful for young families who want to stay in Groton and helpful for seniors who also want to stay in Groton.

Stuart Schulman moved to recommend Carolyn Perkins to the Select Board for appointment to the Affordable Housing Trust. Colleen Neff seconded and the motion carried %:0 by roll call vote: Becky Pine – aye, Cynthia Lane-Hand, Colleen Neff – aye, David Wilder – aye, and Stuart Schulman – aye

Becky Pine thanked Carolyn Perkins and said that she thought her participation would be useful for the Trust. Carolyn Perkins said that she was looking forward to it.

Predevelopment update on Surrenden Farm Reserve Parcel. Votes may be taken.

Fran Stanley contacted the Town of Ayer regarding having the Town of Ayer provide waste water treatment for future development on this site. Ayer is in the process of extending sewer and updating the sewer line to close to the border of Groton. Ayer expressed openness to the idea of providing Town sewer to the Groton project. It would require Town Meeting approval in Ayer. The development of the Surrenden Farm reserve parcel would require several Town Meeting approvals from Groton related to building on the site, extending sewer and potential CPC funding to help develop the site. Fran Stanley spoke with Tom Orcutt who pointed out that Ayer has a pumping station right over the border in Ayer and it may be possible to connect to the pumping station through a variety of routes.

For the August 26th meeting, Fran Stanley may not be able to find a speaker. A developer with past experience with tax credit projects had been first choice, but she will reach out to other people to see who might agree to speak with the Trust.

In a future meeting, the Trust can think about future CPC articles such as one for development feasibility at Surrenden Farm and one for rescuing affordable units at risk of being lost from the subsidized housing inventory.

In a future meeting, the Trust can plan its outreach in support of the emergency rental assistance program. Thinking about the proposed emergency rental program and how it fits with existing programs, Colleen Neff asked if the Trust were not sponsoring this program, who would do it. Fran Stanley answered that the Commissioners of Trust Funds helps very low income households presently and would continue to do so. The Affordable Housing Trust program would assist both very low income households but also higher income households making up to 80% of the area median income. Also, the state has made some help available to rental households through RAFT, but studies have shown that state aid will be insufficient to meet the current need. Becky Pine summarized this answer stating that the Trust's program would give help that would not be available if the Town does not pass this program. If Town Meeting does not pass this program, then it is expected that there will be unmet need.

Becky Pine said goodbye to David Wilder and thank you. David Wilder invited members to reach out to him if needed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.

Notes by Fran Stanley