



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



Becky Pine, *Chair*
Cynthia Lane-Hand, *Member*
Colleen A. Neff, *Treasurer*
Carolyn Perkins, *Member*

Minutes
Regular Session

Date: Thursday, November 5, 2020

Time: 7 pm

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

Members present: Cindi Lane-Hand, Becky Pine, Colleen Neff, Carolyn Perkins

Others present: Richard Perini (Housing Trust applicant), John Sopka (Groton resident), Nathan Shapiro (Groton resident), Jonathan Buttles (Ayer resident)

Handouts: Agenda
Draft regular session minutes from September 10, 2020

Becky Pine opened the meeting at 7 pm. All members present. Becky Pine introduced Richard Perini who goes by Rick to the group. He has submitted a committee interest form and is interested in joining the Affordable Housing Trust. Rick Perini stated that he has been a construction supervisor for more than 45 years and is also a civil engineer. Just last week he finished working on a 400-unit project in Billerica that contains 40 units of affordable housing. He said that he is familiar with RFQs but knows relatively less about the financing of affordable housing.

Agenda Item 1: Prepare for November 16 meeting with the Select Board to discuss the Select Board's own goals for affordable housing. Votes may be taken.

Becky Pine explained that the Select Board had an affordable housing goal for the fiscal year that started July 1, 2020. One of their plans was to hold a workshop in coordination with the Affordable Housing Trust. The Diversity Task Force is planning to participate in the November 16 Workshop as well. Carolyn Perkins observed that she will not attend as she will be participating in the Community Preservation Committee meeting at the time. John Sopka pointed out that the recently approved Housing Production Plan stated the need for affordable housing and that there was a deficit of 100 or so affordable units. Carolyn Perkins agreed that the Housing Production Plan does set goals and that the Affordable Housing Trust is looking at parcels now.

Agenda Item 2: Discuss observations from October 31 site walk at the Surrenden Farm Reserve Parcel. Votes may be taken.

Becky Pine stated that there were approximately 20 people in attendance at the site walk including Cindi Lane-Hand, Becky herself, Peter Cunningham, Anna Eliot, Michelle Collette, Colleen Neff, Annika Nilsson Ripps and a number of others including some abutters who are probably from Ayer.

Becky Pine noted that there are major issues to deal with on this property. Access is an issue. The written agreement between the Town of Groton and the Groton School regarding closing Shirley Road will be relevant. The agreement requires the Town of Groton to close off public access to a portion of Shirley prior to developing the Surrenden Farm Reserve Parcel. Shirley Road is owned by the Town of Groton. Joy Lane that connects Shirley Road to Farmers Row is a road. The path that is broad enough for car traffic connecting Shirley Road to Farmers Row via the General Field parking area is considered a 'way'. Carolyn Perkins commented that land ownership for the road and the terms of the conservation restriction both need to be researched and potential issues resolved.

Becky Pine pointed out that the Trust will need to find out how much improvement of Shirley Road is needed. Carolyn Perkins said that the road will probably need to be brought up to the higher level of street standard.

Becky Pine asked whether there could be access through another town. Carolyn Perkins said that any school bus picking up Groton students that needed to cross the border with Ayer could be an issue.

For utilities, if there is sewer brought from Ayer, then that would require Town Meeting votes from both Groton and Ayer. If sewer is sent to Ayer, then this might trigger the need for an inter-basin transfer permit. Michelle Collette had flagged this potential transfer of water from one aquifer to another as this has been an issue for the Four Corners sewer district. Drawing both water and sewer from Ayer may avoid the aquifer issue. Also, the parcel may do on-site septic with Groton supplied water which would steer clear of an inter-basin transfer. Becky Pine said that Bob Pine saw sandy soils on site which would make it easier to install septic with those conditions.

Ayer resident Jonathan Buttles asked what happens if Shirley Road becomes private. Or, what if James Brook Way [the Ayer continuation of Shirley Road] becomes private. Cindi Lane-Hand passed along a suggestion to partner with Ayer on this project. Another commenter wondered about outreach to the Groton School.

John Sopka asked about whether senior housing is not allowed to be affordable. Fran Stanley responded that the type of housing planned for this parcel is allowed to be affordable. Becky Pine noted that arsenic was raised as an issue when the larger farm was being permitted as a subdivision in 2003. Becky Pine asked about endangered species. Carolyn Perkins said that she will ask Bruce Easom as he is knowledgeable about such matters.

Nathan Shapiro, a Groton resident who lives on Shirley Road, said that thousands of people access this property as a nature reserve. The extent to which this land is used, he thinks that you are going to find that this development is opposed. Tons of traffic would be a barrier to where [Groton School] students are walking.

Becky Pine led a quick review of other town owned parcels mentioned in the Housing Production Plan:

- Bridge Street parcel. 34 acres, miles from water and sewer, potentially brownfields.
- Townsend Road (Fieldstone Drive) near Academy Hill subdivision. On a slope, no sewer. Frontage may be an issue.
- Prescott School parcel. Leased to a nonprofit and not available for development.
- Nashua Road parcel (owned by the Groton Housing Authority). Wetlands issues constrain development but for strip along Nashua Road. Well water would be needed as well as on-site septic.
- Hoyts Wharf parcel. Potential brownfields. Half of the parcel is wetlands or in a flood plain.

Where can the Trust get free help? Mass Housing may be a help.

Agenda Item #3: Reflect on presentation from Connie Donahue and David Hedison and consider how to engage the public in support of affordable housing at Surrenden Farm. Votes may be taken.

Colleen Neff remains interested in learning the footprint of the Shirley Meadows housing. Fran Stanley will follow up with Connie Donahue. Carolyn Perkins noted that any Surrenden Farm tax credit project must conform to the CPC income limits since the property was purchased with CPC funding.

The Trust's new CPC application (2022-04 Reserve Parcel Feasibility Study) will be discussed by the CPC on November 9 at 7:30 pm. Carolyn Perkins plans to recuse herself from consideration of this application since she is a Housing Trust member.

The Trust has \$45,986 in unrestricted funds.

Agenda Item #4: Discuss outreach for the emergency rental assistance program. Votes may be taken.

Trust members suggested a number of ways to share information about Groton's emergency rental assistance program including: Loaves and Fishes food pantry, Commissioners of Trust Funds, pediatricians, Groton Dunstable Regional School District adjustment counselors, press release or letter to the editor, Groton Electric Light Department bill insert, Groton Herald advertisement, Groton Channel, Talk About Groton, Facebook, area religious communities.

Agenda Item #5: Review draft regular session minutes from September 10, 2020. Votes may be taken.

Colleen Neff moved to approve the September 10, 2020 regular session minutes as drafted. Cindi Lane-Hand seconded and the motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote: Neff -aye, Lane-Hand - aye, Pine - aye and Perkins - aye.

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm. Notes by Fran Stanley