



**TOWN OF GROTON**  
Affordable Housing Trust



Becky Pine, *Chair*  
Carolyn Perkins, *Vice Chair*  
Cynthia Lane-Hand, *Clerk*  
Richard Perini, *Member*

**Minutes**  
Regular Session

Date: Thursday, March 25, 2021

Time: 7:30 pm

Location: Virtual meeting broadcast on Zoom pursuant to Governor's executive order concerning the Open Meeting Law

Members in attendance: Rick Perini, Cindi Lane-Hand (arrived 7:48 pm), Carolyn Perkins, Becky Pine and Colleen Neff

Others in attendance: John Sopka

Handouts: Agenda, March 11, 2021 draft regular session minutes

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Becky Pine called the meeting to order at 7:39 pm with Rick Perini, Carolyn Perkins and Colleen Neff also in attendance.

**1. Elect Vice-Chair and Clerk. Roll call votes may be taken.**

*Becky Pine nominated Carolyn Perkins to serve as Vice Chair. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Pine – aye, Neff – aye and Perkins – aye (Lane-Hand absent).*

Becky Pine said that Cindi Lane-Hand told her that she was willing to serve as clerk.

*Becky Pine nominated Cindi Lane-Hand to serve as Clerk. Colleen Neff seconded and the motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Pine – aye, Neff – aye and Perkins – aye (Lane-Hand absent).*

**2. Review of potential development sites. Roll call votes may be taken.**

Becky Pine said that the Trust might consider some privately owned parcels located in the Town Center Overlay District particularly the David Elliott parcels and there may be some others. Fran Stanley said that she had a conflict of interest since she owns a home on Court Street and is an abutter to several Town Center Overlay District parcels. Fran Stanley said that she would file a conflict-of-interest disclosure with the Town.

Becky Pine observed that Select Board chair Alison Manugian would like the Trust to consider the Prescott School site at 145 Main Street. Becky Pine said that she thought that this was a wise idea. Because Becky Pine herself has been involved in the present effort to have community uses for the building other than housing, she asked for another Trust member to take the lead on investigating this property. Carolyn Perkins volunteered to research this site. John Sopka observed that the land was deeded to the Town for educational use.

Cindi Lane-Hand joined the meeting at 7:48 pm.

Rick Perini updated the group on two Town owned parcel listed as Townsend Road but are closer to Fieldstone Drive. Parcel 205-9.01 is approximately 16.9 acres to the right of Fieldstone Drive when heading up the hill. Parcel 205-13.1 is approximately 7 acres to the left of Fieldstone Drive when heading up the hill. Rick Perini said that he walked both sites on March 13, 2021 and the sites appear buildable. Town water is available through the West Groton Water Supply District. There is underground electric in the road running up to the Academy Hill subdivision. There are sidewalks. Access may be an issue as it is questionable whether the parcels have frontage on Fieldstone Drive. The frontage issue raises the question of whether an easement could be obtained. Rick Perini will keep researching.

Carolyn Perkins reported on Bridge Street (Parcel 248-9, approximately 34.7 acres). No town water or town sewer available. Carolyn Perkins described the land as relatively dry and relatively flat. The general area just beyond the transfer station shows a lot of downed trees related to last year's derecho/straight line winds. The frontage is filled with an accumulation of various construction materials that would need to be removed before construction. Carolyn Perkins described the access as poor as it is over an old railroad bridge (short span). The narrow strip of land along the railroad bed is also Town owned (parcel 247-35). Further North, there is a wetlands area off site which would leave a small portion of the northeast tip in a wetlands buffer. For all of these reasons, it did not appear feasible at this time.

John Sopka suggested that the Trust investigate tax arrear properties and thought that this might be worth a conversation with the Assessors or the Tax Collector.

**3-4. Plan next steps regarding current CPC Proposal for Site Assessment funds. Roll call votes may be taken. Also, discuss public engagement efforts.**

Becky Pine stated that the Select Board opposes the Trust's CPC application. Several Trust members watched the recording of the Select Board meeting where the Select Board discussed and voted on the Site Assessment study. Rick Perini said that he does not understand this opposition to the Affordable Housing Trust. Colleen Neff said that it is a fair point to say that we should be working together. She read the description of the Groton Housing Authority on the Town website. Fran Stanley described the three housing committees in terms -- Groton Housing Authority, Housing Partnership and Affordable Housing Trust -- in terms of the age of each committee. The Groton Housing Authority is the Town's first housing committee and it is legally allowed to do many things (rental manager, creation of new units, monitor for homeownership units). The Housing Partnership, of which Carolyn Perkins is a member, stands ready to support developers who are proposing 40B comprehensive permit developments. The Affordable Housing Trust is the newest housing committee in town and its powers and ability to utilize CPC funds provides a flexibility that the Town would otherwise lack.

Carolyn Perkins said that in the past, the Groton Housing Authority had stated that they are not developers and that they are managers of rental housing. She said that there is no way that we are in conflict with these groups. There is no reason to be at cross purposes. We met with the Select Board. We took them to heart. We took the Housing Production Plan recommendations and began to look at properties and put in a reasonable request for \$150,000 which is a modest proposal. The Select Board allowed the Trust to explore Town properties. And then, the Select Board changed their minds when it comes down to the vote. The Select Board needs to decide. There is one person with a goal he has not shared.

Carolyn Perkins continued saying that she appreciated everything that Becky Pine said at the Select Board meeting. Carolyn Perkins asked what John Giger was referring to about Fran Stanley. Becky Pine explained that Fran Stanley sent an email to the Trust earlier in March about the comprehensive permit on the Def Con parcel on Cow Pond Brook Road. The gist was that it was that John Giger felt it was inappropriate for Fran Stanley to have said no to the developer's question about financial assistance without first checking with each of the three housing groups as this was evidence of a lack of coordination. Becky Pine said that she does not think that it was an inappropriate answer as there is no money.

Becky Pine stated that Select Board member Joshua Degen suggested that the Trust withdraw its article. Carolyn Perkins said that it is tough where the Select Board is against it but that she is reluctant to withdraw until the Trust can speak with the Select Board. Colleen Neff said that the Select Board also suggested that they disband the three housing groups. Becky Pine commented that this statement reflects a lack of understanding as there are state mandates for the housing authority.

Becky Pine said that she also had a conversation with Raquel Majeski who is the chair of the Diversity Task Force. Becky Pine suggested that as a prelude to the Housing Summit perhaps Shelly Goehring from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership can give a presentation. Becky Pine said that Raquel Majeski was open to this idea.

Regarding the Diversity Task Force, Colleen Neff said that she did not understand why there is not communication between the committees. Carolyn Perkins has spoken with Michelle Collette who is a member of the Diversity Task Force and she is interested in Trust participation. Carolyn Perkins described the Housing Partnership role. It acts as a supportive sounding board for developers proposing affordable housing. However, the Housing Partnership does not have the same impact as the Groton Housing Authority and the Affordable Housing Trust. Median house prices have increased seventeen percent (17%) since the pandemic which highlights both the need for affordable housing as well as the Town's limited purchasing power at these prices. A symposium would be good.

Becky Pine said that it appears that the general sense is to hold off on giving money until there is a plan. Any plan needs to take available non local funding into account. The group discussed whether the Trust should ask to go to the Select Board so that they can explain their reasons to the Trust. Trust members are discouraged and would like to speak with the Select Board about their vote. Colleen Neff asked if there is a chance for this to pass despite Select Board opposition. The group discussed. Becky Pine said that nothing has happened in ten (10) years and we are the ones who are trying to make new affordable housing happen.

Rick Perini said that the education of our fellow residents has to be correct and current. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership speaker would be welcome.

Becky Pine observed that the 50-unit size of a tax credit project may have concerned some residents. Cindi Lane-Hand reminded the group that any one of us could need affordable housing were certain circumstances to change. Colleen Neff noted that our local money can only go so far so we need partnership to attract outside funding as we cannot do it on our own.

*Carolyn Perkins moved to have Fran Stanley send a letter on behalf of the Affordable Housing Trust to the Select Board to request a meeting for the Select Board to explain their lack of support for the CPC article. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried 5:0 by roll call votes of Perini – aye, Pine – aye, Lane-Hand – aye, Neff – aye and Perkins – aye.*

#### **5. Review regular session draft minutes from March 11, 2021. Roll call vote may be taken.**

Trust members reviewed draft minutes.

*Rick Perini moved to approve the March 11, 2021 regular session minutes as corrected. Becky Pine seconded and the motion carried 5:0 with roll call votes of Perini – aye, Pine – aye, Lane-Hand – aye, Neff – aye and Perkins – aye.*

#### **6. Discuss GIS mapping tools to view species habitat information for various parcels.**

Becky Pine said that she has learned some tricks/tips about using the Town's GIS maps. In particular, to find some mapped conservation restrictions, they can be found if you expand Misc. Polys under the Property Map/Miscellaneous header.

Meeting adjourned 9:02 pm.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 7 pm

Annual Town Meeting: Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 9 am

Notes by Fran Stanley