



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, April 1, 2021

Time: 6:30 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, Carolyn Perkins (also Housing Partnership member) and Becky Pine

Others in attendance: Judy Anderson

Diversity Task Force in attendance for housing summit discussion only: Raquel Majeski (Chair), Audra Waiters, Nii-Ama Akuete, Michelle Collette, Joshua Degen (also Select Board member), Deborah Dowson, Amy Degen, James Moore, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell (also Chair of Groton Housing Authority), Tim Manugian, Gordon Candow

Handouts: Agenda, Becky Pine draft document titled Talking Points re: Affordable Housing Trust's Warrant Article for CPC Funds

Becky Pine called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

1. Prepare for discussion with Select Board on Monday, April 12, 2021.

See discussion of 1 within 2 below.

2. Consider options and public outreach regarding AHT's Warrant Article seeking CPC funds.

Becky Pine said that she has drafted a set of talking points that the Trust may want to consider. Becky Pine said that it is important for everyone to speak up as the Select Board hears her voice frequently on affordable housing matters. Cindi Lane-Hand said that the effort to create affordable housing is an important initiative. The Trust should note who affordable housing benefits, what it looks like and how it can be attractive to the community. Cindi Lane-Hand said that it seems like we take it forward anyway. Rick Perini said that Trust members will stand by their guns to talk about affordable housing and speak about it in our community.

Carolyn Perkins said that she spoke with Select Board member John Giger who was not in favor of the CPC funding. She said that he first wondered about the coordination of Groton's efforts when he heard a presentation from Donald Black regarding the Groton Housing Authority initiative on Nashua Road. Carolyn Perkins noted that the various housing committees are not in conflict and that the Trust's role is to work together. Carolyn Perkins wondered whether some Select Board members would have been more supportive if the Trust had asked for \$75,000. Also, Select Board members do not know how we operate. If John Giger for example could see how the Trust operates with an initial \$75,000 then he could consider additional

funding. Carolyn Perkins said that she definitely thinks that the Trust should defend its request at Town Meeting.

Becky Pine said that if there is resistance as we get closer in time to Town Meeting, then the Trust could consider lowering the amount. One downside is that we may not spend very much of this money regardless since there are CPC limits that are very specific and quite strict on what funds can be spent. Hopefully, in a year it will be seen that we are judicious and have moved forward. No one will be able to access that money until June 30, 2022 if the Trust does not receive this funding.

Fran Stanley said that perhaps the Trust will withdraw the article if it is unlikely to pass and instead apply to the CPC for a straight transfer next year. The group responded that one cannot tell how one's actions would be characterized.

Looking ahead to the Diversity Task Force discussion, Becky Pine has had a conversation with Raquel Majeski regarding the Housing Summit and the benefit of having Shelly Goehring from Massachusetts Housing Partnership contribute with the public education piece. Group wondered what cosponsoring means and is there a collective decision or action to be taken. Becky Pine said that Joshua Degen has described the Housing Summit as ideally occurring outside in June on the Lawrence Academy campus. Carolyn Perkins said that some of the goal is to get feedback from the community. The Summit and the Trust can try to answer the benefit to Groton of having affordable housing and having it integrated in the community.

3. 7 pm. Meet with Diversity Task Force to discuss housing initiatives and coordinate plans for Housing Summit. [Note that the Trust may rejoin its scheduled meeting after meeting with the Diversity Task Force.]

Raquel Majeski welcomed the Affordable Housing Trust to its meeting. Raquel Majeski noted that with the DTF's agenda they will not have time to discuss the Trust's \$150,000 CPC funding article. Raquel Majeski commented that the DTF has a partnership with a racial justice group in town. Raquel Majeski asked how the DTF wants to move forward with the stakeholders here tonight. Becky Pine introduced the members of the Trust, thanked the Task Force and that she is glad to be here as there has been a long period of not much happening.

Fran Stanley introduced herself as the Town's part time Housing Coordinator and explained that housing coordinators are typically paid out of CPC funds and is a position that originated after the passage of the Community Preservation Act.

Audra Waiters provided an overview of DTF's discussions. Specifically, the DTF is in the beginning planning stages now for the Housing Summit and would like an in-person event which means pushing the event far enough out in time to have an in-person event, perhaps the fall. Also, the DTF is discussing how to help each other and what recommendations it cares to make to the Select Board. Regarding committees, Joshua Degen said that the individual committees all have our own charges but nothing has been done in concert. Joshua Degen would like to discuss alternatives as Groton is 173 units short of the ten percent (10%) goal. Joshua Degen said that he would like to have a key note speaker such as Phillip DiMartino (DHCD Technical Assistance Coordinator) or Marc Draisen (former state representative and current Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council).

Joshua Degen said that a Chapter 40B comprehensive permit development can be adverse to the community's interests due to the density and its override of local zoning. However, Joshua Degen added that this development path has gotten a bad name and the best kind of 40B is a LIP project known as a 'friendly 40B'. Joshua Degen explained the Commonwealth's incentive for municipalities to create rental units. If an affordable rental project is done, then the Commonwealth allows all rental units to count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory for the town not just the number of affordable rentals. Joshua Degen concluded noting that if two or three LIP rental projects were done, then this might help Groton reach its ten percent (10%) goal.

Michelle Collette commented that not all Chapter 40B projects are the same. In particular, the bulk of Groton's affordable housing, a full 78 units, are on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) because of a single 40B project at RiverCourt where all of the assisted living units count.

Becky Pine suggested having Shelly Goehring, Senior Project Manager for the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, come in May before the Housing Summit.

The group discussed the idea of the Housing Summit being an opportunity to garner community feedback and present a guest speaker. Nii-Ama Akuete said that it is important to have deliverable outcome. Becky Pine said that it is good to have an affordable housing conversation among people who support the concept. Becky Pine said that the creation of affordable housing requires land, money and community support. Land can be difficult considering the presence of lots of endangered species.

Nii-Ama Akuete said that the elephant in the room here is the opposition to affordable housing. As for various housing groups, Nii-Ama Akuete said that the groups appear to be in the same book but on different pages. Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell asked what the one word or one sentence answer is to the question why are we doing this housing summit. Michelle Collette said that the goal is to implement the Housing Production Plan and that she sees the Diversity Task Force's role as that of advocates in the area of fair housing. Carolyn Perkins suggested that there could be a small group of representatives of each of these subgroups to get together to map out what the housing summit might look like. The group continued to consider Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell's question and agreed that a subgroup would be the way to proceed. Group members will include: Nii-Ama Akuete, Audra Waiters, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, Carolyn Perkins and Fran Stanley. This group is less than a quorum so is not expected to have Open Meeting Law requirements. Joshua Degen said that it is important to work on the framework in the next 3 to 4 weeks so that the sponsors could still aim for a June summit date.

At 8:11 pm, the Trust returned to its own meeting to continue its discussion.

Rick Perini appreciated Nii-Ama Akuete's comment about the elephant in the room. Rick Perini said that education is paramount and he does not think that people in general know much about affordable housing. Also, he thought that the Diversity Task Force's heart was in the right place as he was glad that the committee asked for the summit to produce a result.

Rick Perini has been researching 797 Boston Road at the 4 Corners intersection. Carolyn Perkins provided some history regarding a prior attempt to re-zone to commercial use. The owner did not specify the intended commercial use and that lack of specificity was not encouraging to Town Meeting voters who did not support the change.

The group discussed Becky Pine's list of reasons to support the Trust's CPC funding article and whether and how to approach the April 12 conversation with the Select Board. Carolyn Perkins noted that the Trust could work with the Groton Housing Authority and even provide funding to further the housing authority's Nashua Road development. Judy Anderson asked if the Groton Housing Authority could submit its own independent request for funding to the CPC and the answer is yes. Judy Anderson added that it never hurts to bring up who could be benefitted from the housing because as far as the Town is concerned as soon as you say 40B people are against it.

Rick Perini pointed out that GELD published a notice in the Groton Herald advertising its RFP for the sale of its Sandy Pond Road property.

4. Discuss vacancy on the Affordable Housing Trust.

The Town website is advertising the Trust vacancy. There is no deadline for applications.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, April 12, 2021 at 7 pm (meeting with Select Board)

Next regular meeting: Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 7 pm

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

Notes by Fran Stanley