



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



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

AGENDA
Regular Session

Date: Thursday, April 15, 2021

Time: 7 pm

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

Members in attendance: Rick Perini, Cindi Lane-Hand, Carolyn Perkins, and Becky Pine

Others in attendance: John Sopka

Handouts: Agenda

Becky Pine called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

Discuss next steps for the Trust's pending CPC article for Site Assessment funds.

Trust members discussed their individual impressions of the Monday, April 12, 2021 joint meeting with the Select Board regarding the Select Board's views on the Trust's CPC application. Cindi Lane-Hand said that she was surprised by the number of people in the meeting. In addition to the Select Board and Affordable Housing Trust, the Finance Committee and Community Preservation Committee also joined the meeting as participants. Rick Perini said that he was surprised by the lack of decision making and the putting off of decision making. A few of the comments seemed out of line.

Cindi Lane-Hand said that it felt like decisions had already been made. Carolyn Perkins agreed that this was true for two people. She said that she was pleased with John Giger's comments and John Reilly did not say no. Two Finance Committee members including the chair said yes, two said no and the rest will wait. The CPC took a vote to support the reduction to \$75,000 for the site assessment warrant article. In that sense, there were some positives and overall, the meeting was somewhat persuasive. Carolyn Perkins said that she was feeling more positive about going forward with this to Town Meeting. She added that some distortion of the Trust's statements seemed to happen.

Becky Pine said that she was hugely disappointed. She asked the Trust members whether they should withdraw the warrant article. She added that both Joshua Degen and Anna Eliot think that the article should be withdrawn.

Cindi Lane-Hand described one point raised against the article; namely, that the Town should not approve the funding because there is not a plan. Instead, the money should stay in the CPC account until the Trust or another Town committee has a plan. Becky Pine agreed that this point was raised as a concern but that it does not make sense to her. She recalled that Deb Busser wrote in to the April 12 Select Board meeting suggesting that the Town proceed with the housing committees that it already has working on these issues. Carolyn Perkins followed up with the statement that the Trust does have a plan as it is following the Housing Production Plan (HPP) approved by the Planning Board, Select Board and the Commonwealth. One of the first implementation strategies in the HPP is to evaluate the town owned land for use for affordable housing

(see page 29 of the Housing Production Plan). Members agreed that they think the CPC application should go forward. John Sopka commented that going to Town Meeting is an opportunity for the Trust to educate and refute arguments against.

Cindi Lane-Hand updated the group on her upcoming appearance on Jack Petropoulos' Groton Matters show that will be broadcast on the television cable access channel. She will be speaking about the need for affordable housing, answering questions about the site assessment CPC application, explaining the role of the Affordable Housing Trust and reviewing the Housing Production Plan.

Becky Pine described the features for the May 1, 2021 Town Meeting and the likelihood that the Site Assessment article will be pulled out of the consent agenda to be discussed individually. Presentation ideas from the group included: make it simple and well organized; we do have a plan; have the leverage discussion at the housing summit and keep the message sweet and simple for Town Meeting; reference the HPP. John Sopka suggested that the Trust lead with the need and then bring up the HPP. He also noted that Groton is behind on its state goal for affordable housing.

Discussion turned to which boards the Trust might ask to support its funding article at Town Meeting. The moderator automatically recognizes committees during the committee report portion of each debated warrant article. The Groton Housing Authority, Planning Board, Council on Aging, Diversity Task Force were raised as possibilities as well as Groton Dunstable teachers and having supporters write letters to the editor in the Groton Herald.

Becky Pine observed that there are many paths to creating affordable housing and nearly all of them are deserving of their support. There is no one right answer. She noted that both Alison and David Manugian mentioned 40R zoning. 40R is a designated area for higher density usually around public transit or already built-up areas. Becky Pine said that the three built up areas of town are Lost Lake, Town Center and the West Main Street area of West Groton. Becky said that she doubted that residents of these areas would volunteer to have their area zoned for higher densities. Carolyn Perkins said that the Town Center Overlay District along Station Avenue allows for greater density as well as mixed use. Becky Pine said that maybe something can happen there. Rick Perini said that from what he has seen for 40R or PRD (planned residential development) zoning, that maybe Four Corners would be an area where this could happen.

Trust members discussed pulling together a handout for Town Meeting. The handout will not have photos. The Trust will try to meet again to approve wording for the handout in advance of the April 21, 2021 deadline for handouts so.

Update from Carolyn Perkins on Housing Summit working group.

Carolyn Perkins updated Trust members on the initial planning meeting on the housing summit. The housing summit working group discussed the structure of the summit. The summit will start with a 5-minute introduction of the various housing groups, there will be an explainer about the Housing Production Plan, a presentation by an outside speaker and then the conversation will be opened up to a certain extent to invite public input and audience participation. The working group agreed on the need for a moderator for the summit.

Becky Pine asked if a June date is feasible for the summit and Carolyn Perkins replied yes if we keep it simple. The summit would probably not work on zoom so an in-person though outdoor event is planned.

Becky Pine commented that Joshua Degen and Alison Manugian have each suggested that the summit will yield a single plan on how to move forward on affordable housing. Neither Becky Pine nor Carolyn Perkins thought that this would be a likely outcome of the event. Carolyn Perkins said that people would have to have an understanding before a plan could be made. The Town does have data about what is looked for and that information is in the HPP. The summit would not necessarily be a one-time event. Instead, the summit may be a yearly event to follow up on progress and what we need to be doing going forward.

Discuss bringing MHP presenter Shelly Goehring to speak.

The group discussed the timing of inviting Shelly Goehring from Massachusetts Housing Partnership to speak. Would the Trust want her to speak before the summit, at the summit or after the summit. Unclear at this point what the housing summit working group will recommend as they are just starting to consider the topic of having an outside speaker.

Becky Pine compared the housing summit to the conservation community's once a year forum between conservation groups. This could be a good model. Becky Pine liked Rick Perini's idea of working with either Groton School or Lawrence Academy to create affordable housing somewhere in town that might benefit their employees.

Review draft minutes from March 25, 2021 and April 1, 2021.

Carolyn Perkins moved to approve the March 25, 2021 minutes as corrected. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried unanimously (4:0) by roll call vote of Rick Perini – aye, Cindi Lane-Hand – aye, Becky Pine – aye and Carolyn Perkins – aye.

Carolyn Perkins moved to approve the April 1, 2021 minutes as corrected. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried unanimously (4:0) by roll call vote of Rick Perini – aye, Cindi Lane-Hand – aye, Becky Pine – aye and Carolyn Perkins – aye.

John Sopka commented that he is running for an unopposed seat on the Groton Housing Authority now. Perhaps the Town will want to have a GHA board member fill the Trust vacancy to increase communication between boards.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting: April 20, 2021 at 3 pm

Notes by Fran Stanley