



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 29, 2021

Time: 6:30 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

Handouts: Agenda, April 20, 2021 email from Fran Stanley regarding extension of the Emergency Rental Assistance program

Becky Pine called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Becky Pine complimented Cindi Lane-Hand for her interview on [Groton Matters](#) with Jack Petropoulos. She thanked Cindi Lane-Hand for doing that outreach.

Discuss presentation related to the Affordable Housing Trust's CPC funding article for Town Meeting. Roll call votes may be taken.

Becky Pine clarified with Fran Stanley that a meeting for the Trust had not been posted for 8:30 am on the morning of Town Meeting. There is not sufficient notice to the public for the Trust to post that meeting now.

The Planning Board and Groton Housing Authority have each voted to support the Trust's CPC funding article.

Becky Pine said that Joshua Degen plans to offer a motion to amend the Trust' article. The text of that proposed amendment reads as follows:

I move that contingent to receiving funding from the CPC that the Affordable Housing Trust not expend any of these funds for any purpose until after the Diversity Task Force holds its Affordable Housing Summit and issues an executive summary to the Groton Select Board no later than September 15, 2021.

The group discussed how the Trust might respond to this amendment. Carolyn Perkins said that she had two observations. First, this amendment attributes the planned housing summit to the Diversity Task Force and nothing is said about the Affordable Housing Trust as a co-sponsor of this event. Second, this is the first time that she has heard of plans for a post housing summit executive summary. Becky Pine added that if there were to be an executive summary would not the Trust contribute to that effort.

Carolyn Perkins described current thinking from the housing summit working group. The plan is to have an externally facing summit first. This main housing summit would include introducing housing groups, education about the Housing Production Plan, a Massachusetts Housing Partnership presentation and feedback. Then there would be a second smaller summit comprised of housing groups that would dig into the details of housing production. The Town still needs to know MHP's ability to support the summit.

John Sopka commented that the first summit should be a chance for the public to provide input. Carolyn Perkins agreed that this is our intent.

Becky Pine said that State Representative Sheila Harrington contacted her and she wants to speak up in favor of this warrant article.

Joshua Degen had suggested that the Trust make this amendment. Carolyn Perkins is not in favor of that idea as there is no reason to wait on looking at public parcels as we can work on several fronts concurrently. Also, the September 15, 2021 date is arbitrary. Cindi Lane-Hand said that she does not understand the reasoning. Rick Perini agreed that the reasoning is unclear. Becky Pine said that Joshua Degen seems to be looking for reasons to oppose the article or delay expenditure of this money. If the amendment passes, it may not actually result in a delay but the measure has the potential to do so.

Cindi Lane-Hand recalled that she was re-reading the Declaration of Trust (the Affordable Housing Trust's foundational document) while preparing for the interview and noted that an amendment of this sort is inconsistent with the spirit of what the Affordable Housing Trust was designed to be. Also, the Trust indicated its willingness to take additional input from the public. The Trust discussed this matter in meetings held over the winter.

Becky Pine said that the Trust's path toward producing affordable housing makes the best use of taxpayer dollars in the sense that it leverages the greatest number of units for the lowest expenditure of local funds. John Sopka said that the Trust has been formed by the Select Board and the Town and it needs funds to function. Also, the Trust has been actively soliciting input. Rick Perini pointed out that there is 20 pages of community input in the HPP. The Trust should emphasize that we have a plan.

Becky Pine said that she saw parallels between the Trust's approach to new construction of affordable housing and the School District's approach to new construction of an elementary school. Once the School District was accepted into the Commonwealth's school replacement program, then the District's decisions were guided by the path that would allow for the maximum amount of state assistance for construction. The Trust is taking a similar approach.

Trust members were not in favor of the amendment. Carolyn Perkins volunteered to speak for the Trust if/when the amendment is debated at Town Meeting.

Update on the Emergency Rental Assistance program. Roll call votes may be taken.

Becky Pine asked what Trust members thought about program administrator Metro West's question about extending the monthly assistance for eligible households. A relatively small amount of money has been spent to date. Currently, there are 8 eligible households in the program and for 2 of those households, they received their final assistance payment in April. Metro West asked if the Trust wanted to extend the program by 4 months and projected the anticipated cost of that program change if it were made.

A 2-month extension was discussed instead of a 4-month extension. Becky Pine noted that more federal dollars are coming to the state for rental assistance and an extension may provide more time for households to apply for the state and federal assistance. Rick Perini said that he would hate to see a family suffer if they cannot get the state RAFT awards.

Becky Pine said that she thought that the matter should be discussed with the CPC while Rick Perini, Cindi Lane-Hand and Carolyn Perkins were definitely in favor of an extension. By consensus, the Trust members agreed to reach out to the CPC to ask to discuss this matter with them.

Meeting adjourned.

Notes by Fran Stanley