



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, May 20, 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: Cindi Lane-Hand, Rick Perini, Carolyn Perkins, and Becky Pine

Handouts: Agenda

Becky Pine called the meeting to order for the Affordable Housing Trust at 7:03 pm.

1. Discuss/review the Spring Town Meeting held on May 1, 2021.

Rick Perini said that the Spring Town Meeting discussion of affordable housing reinforces his impression that the Trust needs to communicate and inform residents. Cindi Lane-Hand said that she is grateful that the warrant article passed. Becky Pine said that she is grateful for statements in support of affordable housing made by Rep. Sheila Harrington during the debate.

2. Discuss CPC Kick-Off for the Trust's Site Assessment project scheduled for May 24, 2021 at 7 pm.

Rick Perini, Cindi Lane-Hand and Carolyn Perkins will attend the kick off meeting.

3. Update on Housing Summit plans.

Carolyn Perkins described the current Housing Summit plans made by the Housing Summit Working Group. The June summit will have a Part 1 that involves listening to people and understanding how housing work is organized. Carolyn Perkins observed that due to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) role in reviewing 40B comprehensive permit projects, that the Housing Summit may want to include the ZBA either for the Part 1 external facing session or the Part 2 session aimed at local committees and boards doing the work of affordable housing. Bruce Easom is the chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals. The ZBA will be included in the outreach ahead of the Housing Summit. Also, Alison Manugian (chair of the Select Board) has expressed interest in participating in Housing Summit planning. Carolyn Perkins stated that we need to have flexibility when approaching affordable housing development because what can be built is dependent on sites that are available and the services available to those sites.

The group discussed initial sales and resales of affordable homeownership in Town. Fran Stanley said that new construction affordable homes such as in the newer Reedy Meadow subdivision sold quickly. For resales of affordable homes, the time on the market is variable. There have been periodic resales in the Groton Residential Gardens subdivision – as many as two a year – that have sold within a reasonable period of time. The realtor commissions that are typical for market rate units are either smaller or non-existent for affordable homes. The low-profile nature of an affordable listing has an impact. When resale units are advertised to the public, then buyers are interested.

Rick Perini observed the contrast between Groton's homeownership units and his experience in Billerica. In Billerica, he helped to build an 800-unit rental development. There, all of the units rented immediately. The renters had disparate reasons for renting besides the familiar scenarios of seniors looking to downsize and young families starting out.

4. Discuss efforts to promote affordable housing in Town.

Becky Pine stated that she added this item to the agenda since education and advocacy for affordable housing is an ongoing need apart from a particular warrant article and the upcoming Housing Summit. Cindi Lane-Hand offered to contribute images of various affordable housing developments that are attractive and represent good planning. Those examples include images of Benfield Farms in Carlisle (incorporates walking trails on conservation land), The Coolidge in Sudbury and Oriole Landing in Lincoln. There is even a transit adjacent development in Newburyport that was designed to have landscaping include fruit tree plantings for future enjoyment by residents.

5. Announce Massachusetts Housing Partnership's Housing Institute scheduled for three consecutive Thursday afternoons in June (June 3, 10, 17 from 1 to 4:30 pm).

Becky Pine and other Trust members described this set of three free presentations on affordable housing.

6. Continue review of town-owned parcels, including evaluation and reporting on each parcel, and decisions on next steps.

Rick Perini stated that he thinks the town-owned parcels on Townsend Road/Fieldstone Drive may very well have frontage. There are other conditions on the sites that are favorable for development including sidewalks and availability of Town water through the West Groton Water Supply District. He will keep researching and write up results in a report.

Cindi Lane-Hand looked at the Hoyts Wharf parcel. This site does have wetlands, a vernal pool and the site is in a zone identified for Natural Heritage Estimated Habitat for Endangered Species. Becky Pine said that she learned after speaking with Conservation Agent Nikolis Gualco that Natural Heritage can be asked to look at several parcels in order to give the Trust a sense of how Natural Heritage concerns would limit potential development. This review would be at no charge. The Trust may want to better define what it hopes to develop in order to make best use of the Natural Heritage review. Also, the Trust may want to see if the Groton Housing Authority would like to add the two Nashua Road parcels to the review list for Natural Heritage.

Carolyn Perkins commented that site walks are very useful and wondered if the Trust might ask the Groton Housing Authority to take a site walk together of the GHA owned Nashua Road parcel.

Carolyn Perkins looked at the historical documentation for the Prescott School. She will continue with that effort.

7. Update on the Emergency Rental Assistance program.

Fran Stanley updated Trust members on the four-month extension now available for eligible households. In the May 10, 2021 joint meeting with the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), the idea of an extension was discussed. Each committee voted to support the extension so long as the Town Manager agreed that an extension is allowed per the four corners of the Town Meeting motion creating the program. On May 11, 2021, the Town Manager reviewed the motion and determined that an extension could be allowed. Fran Stanley then emailed administrator Metro West and asked them to implement the new program guidelines. Metro West will perform an income verification for each household seeking to extend and the Trust will be charged \$50 per income verification for that service.

The Town website has been updated with the new program information. Becky Pine suggested that a press release be drawn up to help advertise the program.

8. Review draft regular session minutes from April 15, 2021, April 21, 2021, April 29, 2021 and May 10, 2021.

The group reviewed the April 15, 2021 minutes and made two corrections.

Rick Perini moved to approve the April 15, 2021 draft minutes as corrected. Cindi Lane-Hand seconded and the motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Lane-Hand – aye, Perkins – aye and Pine – aye.

9. Discuss Summer meeting schedule and resumption of in-person meetings.

Becky Pine said that the Select Board has been discussing how it would like to make the change to in-person meetings now that the vaccine is available and infection rates are dropping. There has been some discussion of buying technology to help provide a blended meeting experience to carries forward the positive features of virtual meetings.

Perhaps the Housing Summit can be outside as a meeting to be held under a tent is acceptable to a lot of people. Tent availability is a factor.

10. Other business: discuss invitation for Affordable Housing Trust representative to speak to affordable housing at the Can We Talk event scheduled for the Center on Monday, May 24, 2021 at 1 pm.

Carolyn Perkins said that she was asked to be a panelist for a discussion event on affordable housing. The monthly event “Can We Talk” grew out of the Civil Discourse Project. The event was taken to the Senior Center. The program, which is organized by Anna Eliot, features a different topic each month. Space is limited and so only one person from the Trust can attend. Trust members agreed that they would be happy to have Carolyn Perkins represent the Affordable Housing Trust at this event.

11. Discuss Affordable Housing Trust vacancy.

Becky Pine informed the group that resident Jennifer Nassimos has submitted a volunteer interest form. She would like to join the Affordable Housing Trust. Jennifer Nassimos has lived in Groton since 2013. She volunteers a lot and she works with veterans. She has experience with affordable housing as her background includes work on behalf of homeless people in California. The Trust will invite Jennifer Nassimos to an upcoming meeting so that they can discuss her interest.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm.

Next meetings: June 3, 2021 (via Zoom)
 June 17, 2021 (possibly an in-person meeting)
 June 27, 2021 (tentative Housing Summit date)

Notes by Fran Stanley