



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



Becky Pine, *Chair*
Carolyn Perkins, *Vice Chair*
Phil Francisco, *Member*
Richard Perini, *Member*

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, June 22, 2022
Time: 7 pm
Location: The Center, 163 West Main Street, Groton
Trust members in attendance: Rick Perini, Phil Francisco, Becky Pine and Carolyn Perkins
Housing Partnership members in attendance: Peter Cunningham, Anna Eliot, Rick Perini, Carolyn Perkins
Select Board members in attendance: Becky Pine, Peter Cunningham
Housing Authority members in attendance: Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, John Sopka
Diversity Task Force members in attendance: Michelle Collette, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, and Fran Stanley
Others in attendance: Judy Anderson, Paula Martin, Margaret Scarsdale (Pepperell), Mark Matthews (Pepperell Select Board and Affordable Housing Trust), Linda Witham (former Groton resident now in Pepperell), Mary Westover (Pepperell)

At 7:03 pm, Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order. Becky Pine welcomed the audience members as well as the committee members for the Groton Housing Authority, the Housing Partnership, the Select Board, and the Diversity Task Force. Becky Pine said that the meeting is being recorded. Trust members identified themselves.

Becky Pine explained that the purpose of the meeting is to gather in a round table discussion with housing committees – Groton Housing Authority, Housing Partnership and Affordable Housing Trust -- and a couple of other interested committees – Diversity Task Force and Select Board – to coordinate and discuss each group's respective affordable housing activities.

Becky Pine began by describing Affordable Housing Trust activities with the main goal of trying to find land to use to build affordable housing. The Trust is investigating the publicly owned parcels identified in the [Housing Production Plan](#) and also other parcels as they arise. Becky Pine then described several Trust activities:

- Last fall, the Trust hosted a discussion with [B'nai B'rith Housing](#) to learn about how this nonprofit cooperates with municipalities to develop affordable housing.
- The Trust examined the Hoyts Wharf Road parcel and after a discussion with [Natural Heritage](#) found that despite large acreage, development would be severely limited. Natural Heritage said that the property might only yield a single house lot.
- The Trust reviewed the Heritage Landing 40B proposal for Cow Pond Brook Road and submitted a letter of support.
- The Trust has been in contact with National Grid regarding land owned by that utility in the Four Corners neighborhood. For now, National Grid has paused the discussion for a year while they do their own planning but maybe something will come of it in the future.
- The Trust has looked at the Fieldstone Drive parcels (parcels technically on Townsend Road) cited in the Housing Production Plan. The Trust took a site walk and met with Natural Heritage. Natural Heritage concluded that there is acreage to build on both of these parcels.

- The Trust has participated in discussions and submitted comments on the MBTA multi-family zoning final guidance to be issued by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) later this summer. For local zoning meant to comply with parameters for the MBTA communities, the Trust wants 25% of the units to be affordable.
- Individual Trust members have attended Massachusetts Housing Partnership conferences.
- And finally, for the 40B Deluxe site (500 Main Street), the Trust does not have a formal role but we are encouraged by the plan as discussed.

Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell introduced herself. She is the chair of the Groton Housing Authority and while also a member of the Diversity Task Force, she spoke on Groton Housing Authority activities. Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell said that the Housing Summit last year helped to have information about Town committees get out to the broader community. She believes in the value of more education sessions. For the Groton Housing Authority, the main goal is to run the Authority correctly and under budget. The Authority owns and manages subsidized rentals for low-income households.

The Authority also has two properties on Nashua Road that it is looking to build out. She notes that there is a particular need for low-income senior housing.

Peter Cunningham, chair of the Housing Partnership and a Select Board member, provided an overview of Housing Partnership activities. Peter Cunningham said that the primary role is to meet with developers to hear plans for affordable housing development. The Partnership's role is to advise and advocate for these projects such as the recent 40B development Heritage Landing. The Partnership met with Jeffrey Brem who was advocating local zoning changes that would allow him to build age restricted housing with 20% of the units affordable.

Several years ago, the Partnership met with developer Roger Kinnaird to discuss a potential 40B development on Townsend Road. Natural Heritage concerns sidelined the 40B and the developer eventually permitted 9 residential lots on that property. The Partnership has also met with Donald Van Dyne to discuss his interest in developing a parcel on Boston Road at Four Corners.

Fran Stanley spoke as Housing Coordinator for the Town and discussed senior projects (which were a particular interest for two attendees who would like to move to Groton), the anticipated Deluxe 40B, the 10% affordability goal, and the MBTA communities legislation. Fran Stanley projected that once Groton reaches the 10% goal, then the Town will have much more discretion and choice to encourage the types of housing that residents desire. Also, Fran Stanley described the importance of valuing the minority of parcels that can be developed considering the environmental concerns that constrain development across much of Groton.

Michelle Collette spoke on behalf of the Diversity Task Force and shared her committee's interest in affordable housing.

Anna Eliot, a Housing Partnership member, introduced herself. She recalled serving on committees that produced Petapawag Place (a Groton Housing Authority apartment complex) and Groton Commons (a federally supported senior apartment complex managed by RCAP Solutions). She raised the importance of the MBTA Communities multi-family zoning for shaping future development and ensuring that Groton will continue to qualify for state grants like MassWorks. The Planning Board has contracted with MRPC to provide planning support for the Planning Board on this issue. DHCD is expected to issue its final guidelines on the legislation later this summer.

John Sopka asked about the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw. He would like to see more of it and wants to see affordable tenants in them. Becky Pine said that the Town expanded the ADU bylaw 2 years ago while noting that the Trust is focused on capital "A" affordable housing.

The group noted that information needs to be shared on a recurring basis and that the 3 housing committees should make regular efforts to share information. Phil Francisco suggested use of marketing approaches could improve communication outreach for people in need of affordable housing.

Paula Martin who said she has been a resident since 1993 said that the Town needed to step outside the box. She noted the impact of available services on development. In particular, a factor for the development of new ADUs is the consideration that most of the town is on septic and so a bedroom change has a septic impact.

Paula Martin wondered about reducing lot sizes in sewered areas. She added that somehow our way of thinking about this needs to change. Peter Cunningham said that the Town is about to redo its Master Plan. The Planning Board is engaging a consultant and so housing committees will have an opportunity for input on all of these matters.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Next meetings: Wednesday July 13, 2022 at 7 pm (single agenda item to learn about Groton Farms 40B)
 Wednesday July 27, 2022 at 7 pm (next regular session meeting with several topics)

Other important dates: Wednesday, July 13, 2022 at 11 am (Groton Farms 40B site walk for MassHousing and Town staff and committee members)
 Tuesday, August 2, 2022 (comments due in to MassHousing for Groton Farms 40B)
 Monday August 22, 2022 at 7 pm (SB meets with CPC to discuss possible changes to application/approval process for CPC projects)

Notes by Fran Stanley