



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



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

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, January 25, 2023
Time: 7 pm
Location: Virtual Meeting held via Zoom
Members in attendance: Richard Perini, Becky Pine, Phil Francisco, and Carolyn Perkins
Others in attendance: John Sopka
Referenced document: Draft PowerPoint presentation prepared for February 6 Select Board meeting

Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order at 7 pm with three members in attendance: Carolyn Perkins, Phil Francisco and Becky Pine. Becky Pine noted that this meeting is being recorded. Trust members were identified and their cameras for the remote meeting were turned on.

Minutes

Phil Francisco moved to approve the January 10, 2023 regular session minutes as corrected. Carolyn Perkins seconded and the motion carried 3:0 by roll call vote of Francisco – aye, Perkins – aye, Pine – aye (Vander Linden and Perini absent).

Richard Perini joins the meeting at 7:03 pm.

Discuss Town of Concord's approach to funding its municipal housing trust with real estate transfer fees and building permit surcharges

Phil Francisco shared information about an innovative funding approach for affordable housing in the Town of Concord. In 2017, Concord proposed home rule legislation as the legal pathway to allow a new real estate transfer fee and a building permit surcharge. The idea is to enact those fees and surcharges as a dedicated funding source for the Town's municipal housing trust. These bills did not pass and remain pending. Recently, Concord's Town Meeting passed a warrant article to revive this potential funding mechanism and refile the bills with the state legislature.

According to Keith Bergman, who serves as chair of the Concord housing trust, if passed, these fees alone would generate \$2.2 to \$2.4 million a year. Becky Pine commented that this is an interesting concept but she is a little bit leery because there has been so much of an ask of taxpayers lately. More information can be found in Concord's new Housing Production Plan¹.

Prepare for February 6, 2023 meeting with the Select Board.

Trust members reviewed each slide and discussed what materials are best to present as written material and what content is best shared orally by the presenter. Becky Pine said that on the initial affordable housing slides, it can be said that affordable housing provides – (a) a place to live for seniors who want to remain here, (b) homes

¹ <https://concordma.gov/3152/Housing-Production-Plan> . See also Concord's interim funding guidelines for its municipal housing trust <https://www.concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35281/CMAHT-Interim-Policy-Guidelines-approved-2022-03-07>

for divorcing families who often experience reduced resources due to the need to support two households, and (c) homes for people who work here. Phil Francisco recommended saying more about the emergency rental assistance program which helped ten households retain their tenancy, helped landlords to afford to continue offering rentals and the Trust returned a substantial amount of money from that grant back to the Town.

Group discussed the fact that the Trust is asking for help in three areas from the Select Board:

1. willingness to execute the grant agreement (Exhibit A of the CPC application),
2. a letter of support for the Trust's CPC application, and
3. a policy for consistent source of revenue for the Trust.

Trust members directed Fran Stanley to share a copy of the Trust's application with the Select Board ahead of the February 6th meeting and to ask Mark Haddad to put the Trust's requests in his report. The idea is for the Select Board to be aware of the Trust's goals as members read through the CPC application.

Becky Pine indicated that she will edit the presentation as discussed and Phil Francisco offered to work up a final slide that conveys relevant CPC funding information. Phil Francisco said that the 10% directed to community housing reserves is approximately \$100k a year. It was \$124k in FY23 and the high-water mark was the \$140k received in FY22.

John Sopka said that the Trust is pursuing goals that help the Town meet state mandates which also helps the Town gain state grants. John Sopka recommended that the Trust pay attention to the Master Plan work that the Planning Board is starting. Fran Stanley gave the opinion that the Town should reserve some of its CPC bonding capacity from the unallocated reserve for a future affordable housing project.

Review feedback received from CPC members and the public regarding the Affordable Housing Trust's Housing Trust Funds Request application.

Phil Francisco shared his impressions from the January 23, 2023 public hearing. Initially, there was pushback and looking for more information. In the end, there appeared to be support for the Trust's application and not frustration. There was a question about helping elderly residents to stay here. Some specificity was requested on that point.

Richard Perini said that he did not see a lot of warm and fuzzy, but added that he understands that it is the CPC's job to screen applications. Richard Perini added that he recalled from their November 22, 2022 meeting with the Finance Committee that the Finance Committee seemed interested in continuing on a positive note with the Trust.

Carolyn Perkins noted that the Trust submitted one of the three most thorough applications to the CPC this year. The Conservation Commission requested \$400k which will bring their total fund amount up to \$2 million. The Groton Housing Authority requested \$120,000 for a feasibility study of land off Nashua Road (parcel 227-135). This is the former North Middlesex Mutual Aid parcel. The Groton Housing Authority would like to build 8 single family, single level affordable units for seniors. The units will be owned and leased by the Groton Housing Authority to low-income seniors. Carolyn Perkins said that the application was missing some attachments which will be added later. The attachments will provide a fuller picture of the housing authority's application.

Becky Pine asked to address a matter that she said has come up in the community. Some people have wondered whether the present Florence Roche Elementary School building should be repurposed for affordable housing rather than demolished as is the present plan. Becky Pine said that she spoke with Fay Raynor who is an architect, GDRSD School Committee member and head of the building committee for the new elementary school. Becky Pine said that she learned that there would be safety concerns if housing is located on the school campus. The School District needs the land that the present building occupies. The building is in poor condition which would require expensive rehabilitation to repurpose for affordable housing. Finally, the state will contribute to the demolition costs but not for the re-use of the building.

Regular session meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm. Notes by Fran Stanley

Upcoming meetings and CPC deadlines:

Monday, February 6, 2023 at 7 pm	AHT meeting with Select Board
Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 7 pm	AHT meeting with Groton Housing Authority
Monday, February 13, 2023	written feedback from CPC to applicants
Wednesday, February 22, 2023	AHT meeting (<i>if needed</i>)
Thursday, February 23, 2023	CPC Complete Final Proposals due