



**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: Tuesday, July 25, 2023  
Time: 7 pm  
Location: Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street  
Members in attendance: Phil Francisco, Richard Perini, Becky Pine, Charles Vander Linden, and Carolyn Perkins  
Others in attendance: John Sopka (Groton Housing Authority)  
Referenced documents: June 23, 2023 Still Meadow Repair Estimate by 24Restore  
June 7, 2023 Mirick O'Connell Invoice for \$135 for Housing Authority advice  
July 10, 2023 Mirick O'Connell Invoice for \$427.50 for Housing Authority advice  
July 17, 2023 Dillis & Roy Invoice for \$1,905 for Fieldstone Drive Parcels

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With a quorum present, Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order at 7:05 pm. The Trust voted to enter executive session and moved back into open session at 7:40 pm.

**Invoice**

*Carolyn Perkins moved to approve payment of the two Town Counsel invoices -- June 7, 2023 Mirick O'Connell Invoice for \$135 for Housing Authority advice and July 10, 2023 Mirick O'Connell Invoice for \$427.50 for Housing Authority advice. Phil Francisco seconded and the motion carried unanimously (5:0).*

*Carolyn Perkins moved to approve payment of July 17, 2023 Dillis & Roy Invoice for \$1,905 for Fieldstone Drive Parcels. Charles Vander Linden seconded and the motion carried unanimously (5:0).*

The Town Counsel invoices will be paid for out of the Trust's unrestricted funds. The engineering invoice will be paid for out of the CPC Site Assessment funds.

**Set dates to invite representatives from the Conservation Commission**

Becky Pine asked the group to think about ways to cooperate with the Conservation Commission with respect to finding land suitable for development into affordable housing. The Conservation Commission frequently considers land for purchase. Some properties may be ideal to conserve. Other properties might be used for both conservation and affordable housing. A third category would be available land that is not a conservation target but that might be referred to the Trust for affordable housing.

Trust members engaged in a general discussion about how to approach the discussion with the Conservation Commission. The consensus was to have a general discussion in a regular session. If the Conservation Commission is open to discussing specific properties, then that conversation would be deferred until it can be had in executive session. Fran Stanley will ask Nik Gualco to invite representatives of the Conservation Commission to attend the Trust's next meeting on August 16, 2023.

Regarding municipal policies, Richard Perini commented that he had recently read the Groton's current Master Plan and saw that it did not address commercial development. Phil Francisco said that it would be helpful for the Planning Board if all Master Plan suggestions are sent in to that board or the Master Plan consultant.

## **Update on Still Meadow unit repairs**

Trust members were emailed a copy of the estimate of repairs prepared by Richard Perini for the Groton Housing Authority. The cost estimate totaled \$15,398. Richard Perini was thanked for his efforts. The cost estimate will make it much easier for committee members to evaluate what is needed to bring the rental unit back into good condition as a rentable apartment.

John Sopka, Groton Housing Authority board member, provided some background on housing authority operations. At the Authority's most recent meeting, the board voted to allocate a few thousand dollars into the effort to repair the Still Meadow unit. Interior repairs will be done first. John Sopka is the designated board member to work with the Town to see if it will be feasible for the Trust to grant money to the Authority for the repairs. There was some concern expressed by Authority board members that getting repair money from the Affordable Housing Trust might be overly complex or have burdensome other requirements.

John Sopka reiterated the fact that during the pandemic years, a lot of tenants did not pay their rent. The Authority spent all reserves from all properties on refurbishing Sandy Pond units where the Authority has mortgages (\$620,000 mortgage from Massachusetts Housing Partnership and \$750,000 mortgage from DHCD Home Loan). Sandy Pond is a 9-unit complex. Sandy Pond, like the Brookfield Commons units and the Still Meadow unit, does not receive ongoing financial support from the Commonwealth or any other source.

Trust members agreed to focus on this situation only rather than attempting to set up a program that might accommodate future similar grants. The Select Board will be approached after a grant agreement has been set up. It can be a simple document asking for a copy of receipts for money expended. The 24Restore estimate can be attached to the grant agreement and pinpoints the amount of money needed for the repairs. Richard Perini characterized the nature of the disrepair at Still Meadow as a general lack of maintenance except for the 2 broken doors. If there is an unspent remainder after the rental is repaired, then that money might be saved by the Authority for reserves for the property.

Fran Stanley and Charles Vander Linden will prepare a basic grant agreement.

## **Update on pending comprehensive permits for Groton Farms and Heritage Landing**

The Park Commission is waiting on Natural Heritage's opinion about the use of 2 town owned parcels. Natural Heritage will not act until it receives a plant survey by Oxbow Associates. The Park Commission is paying for that work. If the Town wants to put a permanent restriction on some of its land in order to benefit the Heritage Landing developer, then the proposal will need to pass a Town Meeting vote. Trust members directed Fran Stanley to ask the Town Manager to add a placeholder warrant article for this matter on the Fall Town Meeting warrant.

Groton Farms is expected to continue their meeting until the next meeting

## **Review draft minutes from May 18, 2023 and June 14, 2023**

*Carolyn Perkins moved to approve May 18, 2023 regular session minutes. Phil Francisco seconded and the motion carried (4:0) (Charles Vander Linden abstained).*

*Charles Vander Linden moved to approve June 14, 2023 regular session minutes with corrections. Carolyn Perkins seconded and the motion carried (4:0) (Phil Francisco abstained).*

Meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 7 pm

Notes by Fran Stanley