



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, August 16, 2023
Time: 7 pm
Location: Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street
Members in attendance: Phil Francisco, Richard Perini, and Becky Pine
Others in attendance: Olin Lathrop (Conservation Commission), John Sopka (Groton Housing Authority)
Referenced documents: Draft grant agreement for Still Meadow unit
Draft July 25, 2023 regular session minutes

With a quorum present, Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order at 7:05 pm.

Minutes

Richard Perini moved to approve July 25, 2023 regular session minutes. Phil Francisco seconded and the motion carried (3:0) (Charles Vander Linden and Carolyn Perkins absent).

Still Meadow grant agreement

Trust members reviewed the draft grant agreement. Richard Perini said that he had no problems with it though he wants it checked by Town Counsel. Other members agreed.

John Sopka reported that the Groton Housing Authority board was pleased to have the offer of assistance and had no complaints or objections.

Phil Francisco moved to approve the grant agreement in concept and to ask Town Counsel to review. Richard Perini seconded and the motion carried (3:0) (Charles Vander Linden and Carolyn Perkins absent).

Richard Perini moved to allow Chair Becky Pine to sign the grant agreement with the Groton Housing Authority on behalf of the Affordable Housing Trust if approved by the Select Board and Town Counsel. Phil Francisco seconded and the motion carried (3:0) (Charles Vander Linden and Carolyn Perkins absent).

Fran Stanley to ask Mark Haddad to put the matter on the agenda for the Select Board once Town Counsel has completed his review.

Update on pending comprehensive permits for Heritage Landing and Groton Farms

Fran Stanley started a discussion about Heritage Landing and the many outstanding items to be considered by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Phil Francisco has also been attending recent ZBA meetings:

1. Water supply. No MassWorks grant. Developer would need to pay to extend town water.
2. Nitrogen loading restriction. RFP issued by Town. Unclear on whether Town could condition grant of permanent restriction on developer building affordable housing on its benefited site. Need input from Town Counsel on this point since municipal procurement/disposition laws are constrained by design.

3. Parcel 248-39 (hill next to ball fields). This Town owned land has Article 97 protections. Apart from the Blanding's Turtles in the area, the idea of scraping the hill for fill and improving parking may not be feasible. Park Commission is waiting for Natural Heritage feedback on its proposed plans.
4. Impact of Groton Farms units on Heritage Landing. Developer can continue with present its application and even seek to modify a granted application. Should developer abandon present application and Groton Farms' new units put the Town in a 40B safe harbor, developer would not have the right to file a subsequent comprehensive permit application.
5. Light pollution and radio frequency interference: Extreme negative impacts projected by MIT Haystack Observatory and the Wallace Observatory. MIT is a legal abutter. Olin Lathrop commented that research published in the past 5 years shows that amphibians and insects are disrupted by light. Olin Lathrop speculated that wetlands properties may have protections under the Wetlands Protections Act that would allow the Conservation Commission to consider acceptable levels of lighting color temperature and lux (measure of brightness on destination).
6. Traffic study, stormwater, septic, etc.: Next ZBA meeting will address the scope for the traffic study.
7. Shooting range: Developer proposes split rail fencing. Actual chain link fencing may be needed to deter children from wandering over to the shooting range.
8. Extension: Considering the number of outstanding items, the developer may ask the ZBA for an extension of time (beyond statutory 180 days). The developer filed May 17, 2023 and its 180-day review period ends November 13, 2023. The ZBA has the discretion to grant an extension but is not required to make this allowance.

The Groton Farms comprehensive permit is making good progress. The developer considers the outstanding items complete. The ZBA has directed its consultant to start drafting the decision. The public hearing remains open.

General discussion with Conservation Commission representatives on prospective land purchases

Olin Lathrop is attending as a representative of the Conservation Commission for this agenda item. Becky Pine introduced the topic explaining that the Trust requests that the Conservation Commission when evaluating prospective properties, consider suitability for affordable housing. Phil Francisco added that in the past, the Groton Conservation Trust did something like that through the Groton Land Foundation. Olin Lathrop indicated that he readily understood the concept offering the example that some land by the road may not be ecologically great and so acceptable for affordable housing but the rear portion of a property away from the road might be the main interest of the Conservation Commission.

Olin Lathrop added that the Trust would need to be able to purchase the land, noting that conservation land costs less than buildable land. The Trust might be able to take out a note to buy the land, subdivide, and have the Conservation Commission buy its portion. Becky Pine said that the Trust is attempting to accumulate funds and which reminded her that the Trust needs to submit another CPC application for this year. Olin Lathrop advised that an ANR division is a public process which might alert other buyers. In his experience, sellers do not want contingencies so the fewer complexities the better when approaching sellers.

Olin Lathrop mentioned Richard Roper's Gratuity Road project. This proposed development is an inclusionary zoning project under review by the Planning Board. Due to the projected size of the development, some homeownership affordable units will be required. Olin Lathrop pointed out that his board never approved the developer's filing and that the issue of bordering land subject to flooding was not addressed by the ANRAD.

Regular session adjourned as Trust members entered executive session not to return to regular session.

Richard Perini moved to enter executive session and later to adjourn and not return to open session pursuant to G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a), Clause 6 – "To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body." – PURPOSE – town owned properties. Becky Pine so declared. Phil Francisco seconded and the motion carried (3:0) by roll call vote of Pine – aye, Francisco – aye and Perini – aye (Perkins and Vander Linden absent).

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at 7 pm

Notes by Fran Stanley

Grant Agreement

DRAFT

The **Town of Groton Affordable Housing Trust**, established pursuant to M.G.L. c. 44, Section 55C, and under Declaration of Trust recorded with the Middlesex Southern District Registry of Deeds in Book 58159, Page 199, and having its usual place of business at 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450, acting by and through its Board of Trustees (hereinafter, the "**Trust**") and the **Groton Housing Authority**, a Massachusetts municipal corporation, having its usual place of business at 19 Lowell Road, Groton, MA 01450 ("**Authority**") wish to enter into a grant agreement to restore a particular Authority rental unit to good working order.

WHEREAS, the Trust and the Authority wish to preserve and rehabilitate an existing low-income family rental unit owned by the Authority which is known as the Still Meadow unit (hereinafter, the "Still Meadow Unit") having a location at 285 Nashua Road, Unit A, Groton, MA 01450, which Unit is presently in a state of disrepair that has prevented it from being used for low-income housing for nearly a year;

WHEREAS, the Authority has requested that the Trust provide it with funds to preserve and rehabilitate the Still Meadow Unit, thereby enabling the Authority to make it available for use as low-income housing;

WHEREAS, the Trust has consulted with Town counsel and has been advised that it can make a grant of funds available to the Authority to preserve and rehabilitate the Still Meadow Unit provided that the Groton Select Board has approved the grant; and

WHEREAS, the Trust and the Authority have obtained a detailed cost estimate from 24Restore made on June 23, 2023 estimating total repair costs for the Still Meadow Unit at \$15,398.93;

WHEREAS, the Trust has voted to approve a grant to the Authority for the repair of the Still Meadow Unit as a means of preserving and rehabilitating an existing low-income housing rental unit; and

WHEREAS, the Groton Select Board approved the grant from the Trust to the Authority in the amount of \$15,398.93;

NOW THEREFORE, the Authority and the Trust agree as follows:

1. The Trust shall grant the Authority \$15,398.93 for repair of the Still Meadow Unit.
2. The Authority agrees to spend these funds solely and exclusively on the cost of materials and labor for the repair of the Still Meadow Unit.
3. The Authority agrees to follow all applicable rules and regulations regarding permitting, labor and the purchase of building supplies.
4. After the time that the grant has been awarded and prior to the full completion of repairs, the Authority shall provide the Trust with quarterly reports regarding the progress in making the necessary repairs, including the amount of expenditures to date.
5. After the Still Meadow Unit is fully repaired, the Authority agrees to provide the Trust with a full accounting for all expenditures of funds, including receipts for the purchase of materials. At the completion of all repairs, the Authority shall provide the Trust with a certification that the repairs have been completed and shall provide documentation, including photographs, that demonstrate that the items set forth in the repair estimate have all been repaired.
6. The Authority agrees that when all of the repairs have been completed, the Authority shall place any remaining unspent funds from the grant in a separate reserve account for the Still Meadow Unit and that any such excess funds may be used only for the Still Meadow Unit.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused this Agreement to be executed on _____, 2023.

Groton Housing Authority

Duly authorized by a vote of the Groton Housing Authority on _____, 2023

Town of Groton Affordable Housing Trust

Duly authorized by a vote of the Town of Groton Affordable Housing Trust on _____, 2023.