



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, February 14, 2024
Time: 4 pm
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, 173 Main Street
Members in attendance: Carolyn Perkins, Charles Vander Linden, Phil Francisco, Richard Perini, and Becky Pine
Referenced documents: draft letter to Park Commission regarding Hoyts Wharf Parcel

Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order at 4 pm with Carolyn Perkins, Charles Vander Linden and Phil Francisco in attendance.

Review draft minutes from January 4, 2023

The group decided to defer consideration of draft minutes to a future meeting.

Review CPC applications including request for letter of support from the Park Commission.

The Trust's CPC application is in good shape with receipt of an additional letter of support (for a total of 7). The cover letter from the complete draft proposal will be moved to the exhibits section for the final application.

The Trust has been asked to provide a letter of support for the Park Commission's CPC application. During the review of the Park Commission's CPC application, Community Preservation Committee members noted that both the Park Commission and the housing trust have plans for the Cow Pond Brook area. So, part of the CPC feedback for the Park Commission was the suggestion that they ask for a letter of support from the Trust. The Trust had previously communicated with the Park Commission via November 27, 2024 email which described the Trust's interest in building affordable housing on the Hoyts Wharf Parcel (Parcel 249-51).

Becky Pine said that she and her husband Bob Pine walked the cart path last week. The cart path off of Hoyts Wharf Road leads to a stream crossing. Becky Pine added that she spoke with Eileen McHugh, chair of the Conservation Commission (Cons Com), last week regarding the Cons Com's letter of support. The Cons Com is open to the idea of a land swap for the 'hill' (parcel 248-39) if the Town wants to find a way to make use of the hill to improve the Cow Pond recreational facilities. Charles Vander Linden asked if the hill is feasible. If so, there is no conflict between the Park Commission and the housing trust though it could take years to reach a definitive answer.

Richard Perini entered the meeting at 4:20 pm.

Richard Perini advised that the trust take care when talking about a letter of support since the Park Commission has not submitted a plan yet. Carolyn Perkins said that the situation is awkward because there is a conflict over the land. She added that Richard Hewitt saw the confusion and wanted an understanding of the relative positions in order to better evaluate the merits of the Park Commission's CPC application.

Phil Francisco advised removing the gray zone and get the information that the Trust knows on the table. Phil Francisco suggested that the Trust might offer a letter of explanation rather than support. Richard Perini agreed, stating that he is more comfortable with that emphasis.

The group then offered edits to the draft letter. Charles Vander Linden thanked Becky Pine for writing this letter, adding that the content is important.

Richard Perini moved to accept the letter with discussed changes. Phil Francisco seconded and the motion carried (5:0).

New Business not anticipated.

Becky Pine announced that the Sewer Commission is deliberating a plan to add the 797 Boston Road parcel to the Four Corners Sewer District.

Fran Stanley asked to call Laura Shufelt from Massachusetts Housing Partnership to follow up on engineering work. Richard Perini stated that he has emailed Laura Shufelt but has not heard back from her yet.

Meeting adjourned. Notes by Fran Stanley

Next meeting: February 22, 2024 (may not need to meet)

Draft letter to CPC and Park Commission to follow:

Russell Burke, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

Re: CPC Application No. 2025-02: Cow Pond Playing Fields
AHT's [Summary](#) of Assessment Work on Hoyts Wharf Parcel

The Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) agrees with the need for more planning to improve and expand the parking area at the Cow Pond playing fields, and to create the best array of fields and amenities possible for the Town of Groton. We therefore support the CPC Application for work proposed on Parcels 249-57, 248-39, and 248-40.

The AHT does not support the request for funds for any work proposed on Parcel 249-51. There are currently no playing fields or town facilities or structures of any kind located on parcel 249-51. The Affordable Housing Trust has used CPC funds (granted to us in 2021) to conduct extensive environmental studies on this parcel, known as the Hoyts Wharf Parcel, to assess the feasibility of building Affordable Housing on it.

We also held a pre-development meeting with Jesse Leddick at the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) in December 2021. In that meeting, Mr. Leddick explained to us that because of the presence of Blanding's Turtles on the parcel, and specifically the turtles' migratory patterns covering virtually all of the parcel, that the only development that NHESP would allow on the parcel would be a maximum of one house lot in the southeast corner area of Parcel 249-51, while leaving the remainder of the parcel undeveloped.

The Park Commission's CPC Application (2025-02) includes additional environmental studies and proposed plans for Parcel 249-51, drawn up by LandTech. The proposed plans show new playing fields, parking, and use of an existing cart path which crosses a stream to access the playing fields from Hoyts Wharf Road. Based on our conversation with Jesse Leddick, we do not believe any of these uses would be allowed by NHESP.

The AHT cannot support using CPC Funds to continue exploring development ideas that have already been ruled out by NHESP. On November 27, 2023, the AHT sent a letter to the Park Commission informing them of our intention to proceed with creating the one house lot that NHESP would allow.

The AHT does see the value in creating a master plan to improve the existing playing fields and parking area along Cow Pond Brook Rd. We request that all references to using Parcel 249-51 be removed from the Park Commission's CPC application. And we strongly suggest that the CPC require a level of coordination between any interested Boards and Committees whenever CPC funding is granted, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

Best wishes,

Affordable Housing Trust
cc: Brenden Mahoney, Chair, Park Commission
Mark Haddad, Town Manager