



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: Thursday, March 7, 2024
Time: 7 pm
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, 173 Main Street
Members in attendance: Carolyn Perkins, Phil Francisco, and Becky Pine
Housing Partnership members in attendance: Anna Eliot and Peter Cunningham
Others in attendance: Melissa Robbins, Esq. (Farrell & Robbins, P.C.), Katie Enright, P.E. (Howard Stein Hudson), Patrick Wood (119 Partners LLC), Pat (P.J.) Wood, John Sopka (Groton Housing Authority), Bruce Johnson (33 New Pond Rd.), Nancy Muller (965 Boston Rd.), Barbara Seeber-Wagner (46 Laurel Ln.)
Referenced documents: draft plan (Howard Stein Hudson 2/16/24)
Rendered views of development (Howard Stein Hudson 2/22/24);
printout of §218-3 and §218-9.3 referencing Longfellow Place (ZBA#13-07) and 698 Townsend Road (ZBA#4-09) also permitted under this local bylaw
Still Meadow Punch List (prioritized) and Still Meadow Update
Groton Housing Authority Vacancy Updates (March 2024)

Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order at 4 pm with herself, Carolyn Perkins, and Phil Francisco in attendance. Peter Cunningham called the Housing Partnership to order with himself and Anna Eliot in attendance.

Becky Pine thanked Melissa Robbins for coming to meet today. Melissa Robbins is the proponent for the proposed age restricted housing rental project at 797 Boston Road. The developer plans to build 24 units with 50% of the units affordable to people earning up to 80% of the area median income (AMI)¹. The age restriction requires that each apartment must have a tenant who is 55 years old or older. There will be two buildings on the site each containing 12 units. Each building will have 7 two-bedroom units and 5 one-bedroom units.

Becky Pine said that she spoke with Melissa Robbins during the February 28, 2024 Sewer Commission meeting and invited her to come speak with the Affordable Housing Trust. The Housing Partnership is also interested in this proposed development with affordable housing so the meeting became a joint meeting of both committees.

Melissa Robbins provided handouts and projected the plan and rendered drawings on a projector for the audience. The development will have a mix of apartment sizes and sited as far as possible from the signalized intersection of Four Corners. The parking between the buildings removes parking from the viewshed. There will be sidewalks throughout and around both Forge Village Road and Route 119 (Boston Road). The Fire Department preferred to have the entrance to the development from Forge Village Road. Also, at the same October, 2023 Land Use Department meeting, the project received the suggestion to use porous pavement for the fire access to the development. Accordingly, that "no through traffic, fire access only" section of pavement has been grayed out on the plan. There will be 24 parking spaces of which 4 will be handicapped parking spaces.

¹ 2023 income limits for Groton are: \$66,300 for 1-person household and \$75,750 for 2-person household. [Expected rents](#) would be \$1,775 for a 1-bedroom apartment and \$2,130 for a 2-bedroom apartment. Income limits and rents are recalculated annually.

Melissa Robbins stated that the Sewer Commission would be submitting a warrant article at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting to add the 797 Boston Road parcel to the Four Corners Sewer District. The developer will have a side agreement with the Sewer Commission – a private development agreement – that conditions the allocated sewage flow on the development of this 24-unit age restricted housing development. If the Town Meeting votes to add the parcel to the sewer district, then the parcel will remain in the district but allocated sewage flow is needed to develop the site with town sewer. There is extra capacity in the Four Corners sewer district.

However, the soils are good if the developer needs to do sewer. It was noted that the sewerage flow capacity was designed for 110 gallon per day per bedroom (the senior calculation) rather than the usual Title V calculation that households generate 150 gallons per day per bedroom of effluent.

Melissa Robbins also shared that the developer will be meeting with the Planning Board on March 28th for the in-person initial presentation of the project to the Planning Board.

Melissa Robbins noted that while 50% of the units would be affordable, those units are planned to be senior only and thus [not expected](#) to be Local Action Units that would count on the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). This is not a 40B comprehensive permit project. The developer is applying for a special permit relying on local zoning bylaw §218-9.3 for age restricted multi-families.

Becky Pine confirmed that the units will be rental and asked who will own the buildings and manage the oversight of the affordable units. Melissa Robbins responded that she is not sure on ownership. She presumes that the Groton Housing Authority will monitor the affordable units, that EOHLC (Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities) will review the affordable fair housing elements. As is typical with such developments, the owner will contract with a third-party monitor to help assure that the affordable units comply with all requirements. Chelmsford Housing Authority's CHOICE organization is an example of a third-party monitor that might do this work. Peter Cunningham asked if the affordable units will be deed restricted. Yes, says Melissa Robbins. Affordability provisions will be written into the master deed and there will be the Planning Board's special permit conditions.

Carolyn Perkins asked about the handicap parking spaces noting that the development may benefit from additional parking spaces. Carolyn Perkins asked about the sidewalk composition. Melissa Robbins said that sidewalks near parking will be concrete monolithic pour and that the remainder of the sidewalks will be asphalt.

Anna Eliot said that she applauds the project and asked about the criteria for local preference. Melissa Robbins said that up to 70% can be local preference for the initial lease up. The Town would need to submit evidence for the need for a local preference. Melissa Robbins recommends pulling the housing authority's waitlist and submitting that as evidence.

Phil Francisco introduced himself as a housing trust member and a Planning Board member. He said that there is a [deeper set of plans](#) posted on the town website. He suggested that people go through those plans, particularly the floor plans for the 2-bedroom apartments. Phil Francisco said that he found the plans to be well thought out. He noted that the project aligns well with comments from abutters in the past.

In response to a question from Barbara Seeber-Wagner about an elevator, Melissa Robbins said that these buildings will be walk up only and that the project cannot carry the costs of an elevator. Some of the first-floor apartments in each building will be handicap adaptable. Melissa Robbins introduced Patrick Wood who together with Donald Van Dyne are the principals for 119 Partners LLC.

Fran Stanley complimented the project and said that the housing was greatly needed. She preferred that the unit be SHI eligible and that 2 past projects that were homeownership developments were SHI eligible.

Bruce Johnson, who said that he lives in the area, asked why the project was age restricted. Groton's multifamily bylaw only provides for age restricted housing. Phil Francisco said that this is a good location for senior housing as the project is close to banks, medical care, grocery shopping and a coffee shop. Anna Eliot said that we have other projects for families and too many of her contemporaries have moved out of town due to the lack of senior housing. Anna Eliot said that she fully supports the addition of this parcel to the sewer district and that she would like the update to the Master Plan to address the need for senior housing.

Nancy Muller, a resident in the area, said that she is alarmed by the process because she was not aware of this meeting until the last minute and the same thing for the February 28 Sewer Commission meeting. She said that we do need families and housing for those families. Becky Pine said that there is a legal requirement to notify the

abutters with the Planning Board's special permit for example whereas the housing trust meeting came up suddenly. Fran Stanley referenced the ability to subscribe to committees of interest and receive email notifications of new agendas and minutes that are posted on the town website.

Carolyn Perkins said that she has seen a lot of plans for this parcel and this is the best. Phil Francisco said the proposal improves the overall development and protects the abutters with recission of the sewage allocation if the senior housing is not built.

For the Affordable Housing Trust, Phil Francisco moves for the Affordable Housing Trust to support the warrant article to expand the sewer district at Four Corners for this project. Carolyn Perkins seconded and the motion carried 3:0 (Vander Linden and Perini absent).

Becky Pine said that a statement will be written up and asked Carolyn Perkins to make the report at Town Meeting. Carolyn Perkins said that she thought that it was premature to weigh in on SHI eligibility of the units at this point and that the Trust might wait until after the first public hearing.

Peter Cunningham said that he heard from neighbors about their preferences for the development of this parcel as residential housing and that this project checks the boxes. He said that he would entertain a motion for the positive recommendation for the warrant article. Anna Eliot supports the expansion of the sewer district for any residential use.

For the Housing Partnership, Anna Eliot moved to recommend that expansion of the sewer district to include 797 Boston Road for this age restricted housing development. Peter Cunningham seconded and the motion carried 2:0 (Perini absent).

The Groton Housing Authority does not meet again before Town Meeting starts on March 26, 2024. The Housing Partnership directed Fran Stanley to write the housing authority and request a letter of support for the project.

This item concluded at 8:15 pm. Housing Partnership adjourned.

Still Meadow

John Sopka who was present for the 797 Boston Road discussion offered an update on the Groton Housing Authority's Still Meadow affordable. John Sopka provided the following documents:

- Still Meadow Punch List (prioritized)
- Still Meadow Update
- Groton Housing Authority Vacancy Updates March 2024

John Sopka reported that the maintenance team got most of the punch list work done which has an approximate material only cost of \$6,200. They are waiting for the ordered screens to come in and a refrigerator is needed. Unfortunately, during the cleaning phase, mold and rot was found on the floor of the shower area (under the acrylic shower enclosure). It appears that the shower will need to be removed, mold remediated and the flooring replaced. It is expected that a new tile flooring will be needed for inside the shower. The cost to fix up the shower is not a part of the \$6,200. The Groton Housing Authority has charged materials to the Authority's credit card.

One suggestion was that the Trust be presented with an itemized accounting of the costs the Authority had incurred in completing the repairs not covered by their earlier grant and a qualified bid for any further repairs still needed to repair the leak damaged flooring and supports under the shower to consider at a future meeting. There was general concern that work was being done but the unit is still not in rentable condition. The group may be unwilling to fund another interim set of repairs and will want to see that any new money will bring the unit up to a state of repair that it is ready for immediate occupancy.

Apart from Still Meadow, the Groton Housing Authority vacancy update describes 3 apartments: #207 (vacant since 7/1/21) and #209 (vacant since 12/1/22) at the Petapawag Place Senior units and a family rental at 33D Brookfield Commons (vacant since 6/1/21).

The Commonwealth is helping with the administrative tasks needed to move in qualified tenants to the senior units which are both deemed "maintenance ready". For the family rental at Brookfield Commons, the Commonwealth is helping with extensive capital improvements needed to fix up the unit. A lot of work has been done. Additional work needed includes new appliances and a final walk through by an architect for a punch list.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm. Notes by Fran Stanley

Upcoming meetings: March 12, 2024 (joint meeting with the Park Commission)
March 26, 2024 Spring Town Meeting
April 2, 2024 at 4 pm
April 4, 2024 -- next Groton Housing Authority meeting