



TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Anna Eliot

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, July 9, 2025
Time: 11 am
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, 173 Main Street
Members in attendance: Anna Eliot and Peter Cunningham
Others in attendance: John Sopka
Referenced documents: January 14, 2025 draft minutes

Peter Cunningham called the Housing Partnership to order at 10 am.

Review draft minutes from August 20, 2024

Draft minutes were reviewed.

Anna Eliot moved to approve the August 20, 2024 minutes as presented. Peter Cunningham seconded and the motion carried unanimously (2:0).

Discuss Housing Survey outreach related to the update of the Housing Production Plan

Fran Stanley asked for ideas to increase participation in the housing survey. She reviewed the outreach that had already been done. In 2020, there were about 201 responses to the survey. Presently, we have collected 191 responses. Peter Cunningham and Anna Eliot agreed that including a notice about the housing survey with a monthly GELD bill would be a good way to reach a lot of residents.

Heritage Landing update

Fran Stanley updated the group about the Affordable Housing Trust's June 10th meeting with representatives of the Heritage Landing development¹. Robert Ancil, Esq. and Jeffrey Brem, P.E. met with the Housing Trust. The representatives explained that they were looking to revise their plans so that they could absorb the costs of running the water line down Cow Pond Brook Road to the site.

The project did not win a MassWorks grant. If a MassWorks grant had been won, the Commonwealth would have paid most of the costs for this infrastructure work. Peter Cunningham noted that another MassWorks grant application will be submitted. The developer is looking at several actions that might make it feasible for the developer to proceed. The changes and/or alternatives considered are:

- reconfiguring development by increasing total number from 28 to 36 which would increase affordable units from 7 to 9 (some bedroom counts for units reduced from 3 bedroom to 2 bedroom to fit septic requirements);
- asking the Affordable Housing Trust for financial support; and
- asking for permission to use private contractors to do the water line extension (the prevailing wages paid to workers on public projects inflates the cost).

¹ Heritage Landing was granted a comprehensive permit that was filed with the Town Clerk on July 1, 2024 for 28 homeownership units on a site off Cow Pond Brook Road. 7 of the units will be affordable and all were planned as 3-bedroom units with a first-floor bedroom.

Jeffrey Brem noted that the initial traffic study data looked at siting 40 units which was well over the 28 units eventually permitted. He expressed confidence that increasing the unit count to 36 would also be feasible. The Housing Trust supported the increase in units which would also increase the affordable units. The developer has constraints on the amount of septic capacity so the plans reduced bedroom counts for some of the units.

The Housing Trust listened to the suggestion that they might contribute to the project either with CPC funding or its other less restricted funds. Trust members asked to see more details and yet were hesitant in part due to negative connotations from the Trust's investment in the Boynton Meadows development. Robert Anctil said that he was painfully aware of the difficulties with Boynton Meadows. Part of that problem was that the Trust participated as an investor and the money was put in up front. He said that there are different ways to structure the support so that the Trust's money is not in jeopardy and would be contributed to the project later.

Discuss recent zoning proposals designed to increase the production of housing and affordable housing

The group discussed recent zoning proposals. Fran Stanley shared Amy Dain's Upzone Newsletter that covers new proposals and municipalities that have passed pro-housing bylaws. Amy Dain talks about weighing the cumulative effect of individual regulatory actions as the overall effect may be quashing housing development. Dain's newsletter covered recent Acton zoning that allows multifamily development by right under certain conditions.²

Fran Stanley reported that members of the Planning Board have committed to revisiting and revising the Groton's multifamily bylaw. The Planning Board approved a senior multifamily project in the Four Corners neighborhood (797 Boston Road). The developer has not started construction. Under the bylaw, 50% of the units must be affordable and it is unclear whether this 24-unit project will be economically feasible to build. The project was permitted as rentals. Land Use Department staff fielded questions about whether the project could be built for ownership units and asked whether the Planning Board might reduce the affordable requirement. The answer was that the developer could probably switch to homeownership (as in condos) with notice to the Planning Board. However, because the multifamily bylaw sets 50% affordability, the Planning Board may not have the discretion to reduce the requirement.

Apart from zoning, the Upzine newsletter describes the move to revise the building code prohibition of single stair in multifamily developments. There is a two-staircase requirement that drives up costs, reduces livable space, and limits quality design. The building code moved to require double staircase as a safety measure and this was well before the introduction of sprinkling.³ One study estimated that allowing single-stair housing for midrise developments could allow for 130,000 more units in the greater Boston area that would be proximate to public transit. Most of those units would be built on small to mid-sized parcels in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville.

Meeting adjourned at 11 am.

Notes by Fran Stanley

² The Town of Acton adopted new zoning for [Open Space Residential Development](#), to protect more open space and promote development of smaller homes. The new zoning allows for multifamily housing as-of-right, at a density of up to seven units per acre in all residential zones, as long as 60% of the property is restricted as open space and other requirements are met. By special permit, up to 15 units per acre are allowed, with an 80% open space set-aside.

³ See [Legalizing Mid-Rise Single-Stair Housing in Massachusetts](#), a 2024 Boston report, for more information.