



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



Stuart M. Schulman, *Chair*
Sheila Julien, *Vice Chair*
David A. Wilder, *Treasurer*
Joshua A. Degen, *Member*

Meeting Minutes

Regular Session

Date: Thursday, July 12, 2018
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Lunch Room, 2nd Floor, Town Hall, 173 Main Street Groton, MA
Attending Members: Stuart Schulman, Sheila Julien, Joshua Degen
Other attendees: Russ Harris, Becky Pine
Meeting handouts: Agenda, draft minutes from June 14, 2018

Stuart Schulman called the meeting to order at 7:20 pm.

The group resumed a conversation from a prior meeting about the viability of building on town owned land and doing a ground lease for the use of the property for affordable housing. Becky Pine said that she read over Dick Heaton's reports and that she thought that all of the reasons for increasing affordable housing that existed ten (10) years ago are still relevant today. She asked about the Brown Loaf property and the town owned parcels on Cow Pond Brook Road. Sheila Julien mentioned the reserve parcel at Surrenden Farm (14 acres). Joshua Degen asked for research into the Town of Lexington's use of tax credits to fund the construction of affordable housing.

Housing Trust Vacancy

There is one vacancy on the housing trust. So far, two residents have expressed interest in joining the trust – Colleen Neff and Leah Carter. Becky Pine said that she is interested too and plans to submit an interest form. Trust members discussed and asked for each of the applicants to be invited to attend the housing trust's next meeting on Thursday, August 30 at 7 pm so that the housing trust can meet them.

Current Housing Proposals on Townsend Road

Fran Stanley reported that Roger Kanniard's 372 Townsend Road parcel is the only plan in the works that would create affordable housing on Townsend Road. Early this spring, Mr. Kanniard stated that he was interested in submitting a request for a friendly 40B (also known as a LIP) project, but the Town is still waiting for the developer to make a start by submitting plans to the Housing Partnership.

Joshua Degen asked about how the 372 Townsend Road project has relevance to the housing trust. Fran Stanley said that if one or two homeownership units are bought out with CPC grant funds to be used as affordable rentals by the housing authority, then the housing trust's involvement could be very useful as a facilitator by explaining the project to the Town and overseeing the closing. Joshua Degen said that personally he is not interested in depleting the CPC community housing fund for the purchase of only one or two units to be transferred to the Groton Housing Authority. He suggested that those groups who are interested in such a plan could come forward and submit an application to the CPC.

Increasing Inventory of Apartments in Groton to Meet Local Demand

Russ Harris explained that as an editor of the Groton Herald newspaper, he frequently hears from people who want to rent in Groton and do not need a subsidized or income-limited 'affordable' apartment. He also is aware of a number of seniors who own their homes but need additional income in order to remain in Groton
July 12, 2018
Page Two

as they age. For some seniors, adding an apartment and renting it out could provide welcome rental income so that they are not priced out of town.

Russ Harris said that Groton allows two family conversions 'by right' under its zoning bylaws. Increasing accessory apartments could be another mechanism for leveraging more rental units in Groton. Russ Harris mentioned that Exit Assurance Realty's Jeff Gordon sometimes advises seniors not to sell their homes but instead suggests renting out their large paid off existing home and then live in another place on that income stream.

Russ Harris suggested having the housing coordinator become an informational resource to owners in order to open up additional rental housing. He thought that the Town might also be able to take on some of the landlord responsibilities in the interest of increasing the rental housing stock. Becky Pine mentioned the creation of a bridge loan to help owners with upfront costs.¹ Russ Harris asked if there might be a panel of experts to help homeowners that want to create an apartment. Becky Pine asked about town bylaws allowing a house to be divided into 3 or even 6 units.²

In the discussion, several people stated that septic constraints may be the largest problem for owners who want to add an apartment. Also, it may be desirable to allow larger sized apartment sizes of 1,300 or 1,400 square feet in order for seniors move into the apartment and then rent out the larger sized home.

Sheila Julien asked Fran Stanley to gather more information on accessory dwellings and in-law apartments to allow the housing trust members to sift through that information and move forward. The housing trust needs to determine what is feasible and desirable for them. Russ Harris said that his first meeting on this topic was with the CPC (Community Preservation Committee). As a group, they are very interested in having their accumulated housing funds used to create more affordable housing. Also, he said that some CPC members are concerned that they aren't getting the value of the housing coordinator position for their continued year over year funding.

Joshua Degen recommended that Russ Harris send letters to other Town boards and even consider having a summit that might result in a CPC application. Stuart Schulman suggested generating some interest in the concept before worrying about the details.

Minutes

Members reviewed draft minutes.

Joshua Degen moved to approve and release the June 14, 2018 regular session minutes as submitted. Sheila Julien seconded and the motion carried 3:0 (David Wilder absent).

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 30, 2018 at 7 pm

Minutes by Fran Stanley.

¹ The Commonwealth has a Home Loan Modification Program that can be used to create additional living space and accessory dwelling units for income-eligible homeowners for the benefit of elderly or disabled family members. See <https://cedac.org/hmlp/> for more information.

² In Groton's bylaws, §218-27 is a multi-family use provision that permits a dwelling conversion for up to 3 units under certain conditions so long as the property is owner occupied.