

Affordable Housing Trust
February 1, 2024
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference



Roll Call

Present were:

Victoria Petracca, Chair
Frank Streeter, Secretary
Jason Allison
Carolyn Read
Debra Williams
Kelly Dolan, ex officio (absent)

Brian Keating, Director of Community Development and Planning
Ralph Gifford, Lancaster Sewer Commission

Chair Petracca called the Affordable Housing Trust's meeting to order over Zoom at 7:04 PM and called the roll of the Trustees.

As required annually, the Board voted to reorganize. After a very brief discussion,

Trustee Streeter moved to reappoint Trustee Petracca as Chair; Trustee Read seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote. Chair Petracca accepted the position.

After another brief discussion,

Trustee Read moved to reappoint Trustee Streeter as Secretary; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote. Secretary Streeter accepted the position.

Chair Petracca noted that the Trust's submission to the Town's Annual Report is due on March 7. She reviewed the process. Chair Petracca and Secretary Streeter will write up a report and will circulate it to the Board.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the Trust's November and December meetings,

Trustee Read moved to accept the minutes; Trustee Allison seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

Scheduled Appearances

None

Inclusionary Zoning

Agenda item number five was taken out of order. Chair Petracca reported that she had not received an update from Town Counsel about the proposed changes to the current Inclusionary Zoning regulations. Given this delay, it is unclear if an article will be ready to be included in the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting in May, so it may be pushed back to the Special Town Meeting, which is usually held in the Fall.

Updates to Lancaster's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

North Lancaster 40R

Chair Petracca said there was no update on any development on the 40R zone in North Lancaster. Chair Petracca said that the project is presently in front of the Conservation Commission. Secretary Streeter updated the board on the status of 702 LLC and the parts of their project now in front of the Planning Board. Trustee Allison, when asked by Secretary Streeter about the MOU between 702 and the Town, would not say how the Select Board had changed it and suggested watching the videos of their meetings.

Cottage Lane rentals 40B

MCO's Cottage Lane project has finally been fully approved and all 32 units have been added to the Town's SHI. This means that the Town's percentage of affordable housing has increased to 6.2%. Chair Petracca and Trustee Read worked hard on getting a local preference for Lancaster residents approved. Six out of the eight affordable units will have a local preference for residents, Town employees, families with children in the Nashoba School System, and employees of the school district.

Neck Farm Estates 40B

The next ZBA hearing for the Neck Farm Estates 40B project located at 13 Neck Road in front has been continued until February 22. Ralph Gifford, of the Lancaster Sewer Commission, appeared and discussed the lack of available sewer credits for the project. He is concerned that no sewer credits will be available before Q2 of 2025, which would significantly delay the project. Lancaster Planning Director Brian Keating announced that the stormwater plans for the project are now under peer review with BSC. The ZBA will review the stormwater calculations on February 22 and will review the traffic study for the project by Vanasse Associates at their next meeting.

Harbor Homes/2038 Lunenburg Rd.

The Laurel Hill development at 2038 Lunenburg Rd. is still having issues with overflow from their detention pond and as a result is still under an enforcement order from the Conservation Commission. Planning Director Keating gave an update on the status of the Town's Conservation Agent as the existing one has resigned to take a new job with the Commonwealth. The position has been reposted.

197 Main St. (previously 213-219 South Main St.)

The developer of 197 South Main St. has finally completed their paperwork such that a building permit can be issued for the project. The project is now eligible to be submitted to the State so the one affordable unit can be added to Lancaster's SHI.

Shaker Village

There four affordable units in Shaker Village on Meditation Lane that are ownership units. There are no rental units in that development. The deeds say the affordability restrictions expire in 2033, but the law says they expire 50 years from the original date of purchase, which was in 2003. This was discovered by MetroWest Development and is being reviewed by the State to make the appropriate changes to the deed.

Housing Production Plan

The Board reviewed the bids the Town received for the Housing Production Plan. (HPP) Chair Petracca assigned aliases to each submittal for required confidentiality under public procurement laws for the purposes of the discussion. Planning Director Keating reviewed the process for selecting one of them. Trustee Read suggested using an overall ranking.

Chair Petracca pointed out that one of the proposals included pricing data, which violated the terms of the RFP for the project. This vendor was excluded on that basis, but had been the least popular of the three anyway. Chair Petracca checked the references of the other two firms and both called back promptly and all their references checked out. Trustee Read pointed out that one proposal had no timeline while the other had a timeline, and the one without the timeline had a skimpier presentation.

Director Keating noted that one of the vendors had a national profile while the other was more focused in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts focused firm has more local knowledge reference to housing production plans, and housing issues in general, but the other firm with a national focus has a great deal of data to be able to bring to bear on the question. Trustee Williams agreed about the local focus, but noted that much of it was in Western Massachusetts.

Trustee Williams asked what the process was for opening bids and the schedule for the project in reference to the Trust's upcoming meeting on February 15. Director Keating explained the process, especially in relation to pricing and negotiations. Chair Petracca will work with Lancaster Town Administrator Kate Hodges to distribute pricing information.

After discussion, the national group was ranked slightly ahead of the group with more Massachusetts experience. The Trust will meet at 7 PM on February 15 over Zoom to discuss the pricing of the proposal. After a brief discussion,

Secretary Streeter moved to approve the choice of vendor and the February 15 date of the meeting to discuss pricing; Trustee Read seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

Director Keating will reach out to Administrator Hodges for the requisite documents for the next step.

New Business

Trustee Williams remembered past Select Board member and original Affordable Housing Trustee Jay Moody, who had recently died unexpectedly. The Trustees fully endorsed her sentiments. Chair Petracca noted that Trustee Moody was the first person to bring 40R zoning to her attention, which eventually led to the creation of the large rental project on Lunenburg Road. She commended his broad knowledge base and eternal curiosity, and noted that he will be truly missed.

Public Comment

None

Communications

None

The next regularly scheduled meetings of the Affordable Housing Trust will be held on Thursday, February 15, 2024 and on Thursday, March 7, 2024, both at 7 P.M. via Zoom.

Adjournment

There being no further business to consider,

Trustee Read moved to adjourn the meeting; Secretary Streeter seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary