

AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
Thursday, February 7, 2019, 7:00 p.m.
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

In Attendance

Members: John Hornik, Nancy Schroeder, Greg Stutsman, Jay Levy, Tom Kegelman, Sidonio Ferreira, Douglas Slaughter (7)

Staff: Nate Malloy, John Page

Guests: Elisa Campbell, Susan DeGrave

Prepared by John Page

Meeting Called to Order: 7:10PM

1. Announcements

New members needed. Community Activity Form available on the Town website. Trust discussed recruitment strategies.

2. Approve minutes

Amend minutes to indicate who was absent.

VOTE: Approval of the January 10, 2019 minutes.

MOTION: Jay Levy

SECOND: Greg Stutsman

VOTE PASSES: Tom and Nancy Abstain.

3. Discussion of revised draft of Town Housing Policy

Focus on data and stories illustrating need. First draft of report prepared by for next meeting. Housing Coalition has been collecting testimonies and qualitative experiences. Elisa suggests Byline with Stan Rosenberg put on my Amherst Media and the LWV as an effective outreach tool. Amherst Media could even film testimonies/housing narratives. These will be paired with the qualitative evidence to form an evidence-based narrative about housing in Amherst.

John shares that at a recent CBDG hearing, several neighbors are coming out against the Valley CDC project. Therefore, we need to mobilize and make sure advocates from the Housing Coalition are also aware of and showing up to these meetings. Tom suggests that we should use the Butternut project to reveal the data and quell the false concerns and dispel stereotypes.

4. Update on status of RFP for East Street School

John reports on meeting with the Town Manager: Town Manager is satisfied with the RFP. When it will be on the agenda is a matter requires buy-in from Town Council President—agenda-setting is her jurisdiction.

Trust members conclude to lobby individual Town Councilors to make the East Street School project up as a priority emphasizing the urgency of approving the RFP to address the need for affordable housing production.

Timeline: How will timing affect the ability of a bidder to apply to state. Application process begins in December. To apply the developer must have completed plans and permitting. If Historic Commission initiates that will delay the process further—by approximately a year. Nancy suggests that it would be helpful to outline the process in a timeline. John will work on preparing a timeline or process diagram for next meeting.

Doug shares context that the Council cannot vote on anything they have seen for the first time in that meeting and this may need multiple meetings to get Councilors to a place that they are confident to approve. Jay stresses the important of the initial outreach to neighbors.

5. Discussion of Town CPA Proposals

Adding Housing to Conservation Commission Proposal

Part of the land designated for solar (23 acres). Town approached CPA with a request for 200,000 about purchasing the remainder of the land for conservation (17 in habitat restoration). The frontage parcels and some land (6-9 acres) is developable.

VOTE: Support for the Hickory Ridge proposal with the expectation that affordable housing be included.

MOTION: John Hornik

SECOND: Doug Slaughter

VOTE PASSES unanimously.

Greg notices that in letter to CPAC “By a vote of 5-0, members of Housing Trust voted to recommend the following...bonding of proposals 1 [Valley CDC Studio Apartment project] and 3 [Development Support for Affordable Housing]” He suggests while we are advocating for the bonding of the Valley project, however, the support for the Trust is a smaller amount and CPAC may not be able or willing to bond for that. Therefore, we should advocate for *funding* that project not *bonding*. Nate agrees to notify the CPAC of this at their next meeting.

6. Review of Landlord Forum

About 30 people attended, about half were landlords. Nancy is putting together a letter and include the contact info for the resources on the panel which Nate can relay to the many landlord both who attended and who could not. This forum was designed as the first in a series. May-June is optimal timing for placements. Nancy will look other topics for forums. Jay emphasized that at the end of the event the resource people should stay after to talk with individual landlords. Nancy says that most important is the general principle of having informed landlords.

7. Report on MassHousing Grant-Planning for Housing Production

Nate reports out interview summaries and findings to-date: Grant awarded assigned a consultant to identify possible locations for 40R districts and also individual properties that would be appropriate for affordable housing.

Hired Karen Sunnarborg, one of the authors of the Housing Production Plan and her collaborator, David Eisen, an architect, conducted interviews with stakeholders and possible developers. Nate has included a written summary of the interviews.

Now they are moving on to developing prospective sites/boundaries for a 40R district. BL zone limit the ability for housing, but a 40R district would allow for greater development. Greatest opportunities are downtown.

Property owners have to be willing, on-board. Increasing density is the incentive for existing and future developers. John emphasizes giving people options making sure neighbors feel part of the decision-making process. John emphasizes reaching out to community stakeholders that may be opposed to get early buy-in. Potential late March-Early April forum on downtown 40R overlay district. Educating the public on the state Smart Growth initiative would be important. Once proven support of stakeholders, present proposal to Planning Board/Town Council.

8. Items not anticipated within 48 hours

9. Next Meetings

Coalition: February 20th, 6 PM, Glass Room, Bangs Center
Housing Trust, March 14, 7 PM, First Floor Meeting Room,
Town Hall.