

AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
Thursday, May 9, 2019, 7:00 p.m.
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

In Attendance

Members: John Hornik, Nancy Schroeder, Sidonio Ferreira, Greg Stutsman, Tom Kegelman, Jay Levy (6)

Absent:

Staff: Nate Malloy

Guests: Jade Lovett

Prepared by John Hornik and Nate Malloy

Meeting Called to Order: 7:00PM

1. Announcements – The Town Manager placed a recommendation before Town Council to approve a local Short Term rental fee, as an add-on to the State fee. Consistent with State Statute, at least 35% will be allocated to affordable housing.
2. Approve minutes - Approval with one change. Nancy Schroeder did not attend the last Trust meeting.
3. Discussion and vote on final draft of Town Housing Policy
The Trust approved dissemination of the draft policy by a vote of 6-0 with a small number of minor changes:
 - The title will read “Proposed Amherst Affordable Housing Priorities Policy”;
 - Draft watermark with date to be added to policy pages;
 - Policy section is to be more clearly labelled;
 - The second paragraph under section II, part 1, should begin with the following sentence: “No specific goals are defined for the population-in-need above 110% AMI.”
 - Any references to the “Select Board” should be replaced by “Town Council”.

There was also discussion of the need to identify resources to track the actual number of affordable units as outlined in section III.

John presented a draft transmittal letter to Town Council, the Planning Board, and the Community Preservation Act Committee. Each group will be asked to review the draft policy and respond to the Housing Trust by July 1 with comments and a statement of willingness to endorse it. Once this process is completed, the policy will be distributed to other interested groups.

4. Update on shelter season at Craig's Place by Jade Lovett

Jade presented some preliminary statistical information on the shelter season that ended on May 1. 150 persons were guests of the Craig's Place with a total of 5,096 bed nights. Lengths of stay were longer than in the past year. Gender and race were unchanged. The number of persons self-reporting "mental illness" increased (62%), but self-reports of "substance abuse" decreased (28%) with 19% of guests reporting a dual diagnosis. Age increased (42% over age 50, 5% youth). The shelter was full with the exception of the first and last weeks when it was open.

The shelter continues to operate on a limited budget with staff living with low salaries. Additional sources of funding are needed. The shelter is not able to serve everyone who requires it. People are turned away many nights.

5. Discussion of funding affordable units required by Inclusionary Zoning

Developers who are required to maintain a small number of affordable units have difficulty doing so because of the complicated steps required to identify and select eligible renters. Nate asked whether the Trust would consider subsidizing these costs to reduce the expense to developers and to assure that the process works smoothly.

Towns elsewhere in the state (e.g., the Cape) have identified an organization that could take this responsibility with both the towns and the developers contributing to the costs. This arrangement has received approval from DHCD. It was suggested that Amherst could combine with other towns to develop this approach. Tom agreed to approach Wayfinders to determine if they would have an interest in this.

6. Updates and next steps

a. CPA Community Housing Proposals: CPA has recommended funding for the Valley Community Development plan to develop a studio apartment for low income single adults (\$500,000 to be bonded); \$240,000 to the Housing Trust to support future development and continuation of the Trust consultant; Funding to support a local housing voucher program under the auspices of Amherst Community Connections; a proposal for homeownership subsidies was not recommended.

b. East Street Request for Proposals. Town staff continue to work on final preparations. Nate expects this will be ready by the end of the month.

c. Smart Growth and 40R Zoning – second town forum will be held on Tuesday, June 4th, 6-8 PM in the Jones Library Woodbury room.

d. Amherst Coalition for Affordable Housing will meet next on Tuesday, May 21 at the Bangs Center. Primary focus will be on increasing public support for the Valley Community Development plan to develop a studio apartment for low income single adults.

7. Items not anticipated within 48 hours - None

8. Public Comments - None

9. Next Meetings

a) Housing Trust – Thursday evening, June 13th, then July 11th

b) Housing Coalition – Tuesday evening, May 21st

c) Council Finance Committee – Thursday afternoon, May 23

d) Town Council CPAC recommendations review – Monday, June 3 (but could be postponed)

e) Smart Growth Forum #2 – Tuesday, June 4, 6-8 PM, Woodbury