

Town of



AMHERST

Massachusetts

TOWN HALL
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

**AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
PUBLIC MEETING**

**Thursday, September 12, 2019
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.**

1. Announcements
2. Approve minutes from August meeting
3. Discussion of Trust priorities
 - a. Develop CPA-AMAHT joint housing strategy
 - b. Local housing voucher program
 - c. Program to support developers implementing Inclusionary Zoning requirements
 - d. Program to support accessing affordable housing opportunities
 - e. Discussion of Subcommittees
4. Discussion of informal camping/housing due to closed shelter
5. Plan for fall housing forum
 - a. Goals for the forum
 - b. Program and agenda
6. Updates for review and discussion
 - a. Town-owned properties
 - b. Review draft Town Affordable Housing Policy
 - c. Affordable Housing Coalition activities
 - d. Support zoning changes for 40R and Smart Growth planning
 - e. 132 Northampton Road
 - f. Status of Craig's Doors
7. Items not anticipated within 48 hours
8. Public Comments
9. Next Meetings

AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

Thursday, August 8, 2019, 7:00 p.m.

First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

In Attendance

Members: John Hornik, Erica Piedade, Rob Crowner, Nancy Schroder (5).

Staff: Nate Malloy, Rita Farrell, John Page

Guests: None

Absent: Carol Lewis, Paul Bockelman, Tom Kegelman, William Van Heuvelen

Prepared by John Page

Meeting Called to Order: 7:05PM

Announcements

John shared that the \$10,000,000 was added to the state budget: Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program funding (from \$100,000,000 to \$110,000,000). Additionally, MRVP vouchers raised to current fair market rents. State increased the match money for Community Preservation Act monies.

John reported back from a meeting of the Homelessness Subcommittee about AHA Voucher utilization data from Erin Cassidy.

- In 2017, we issued 55 vouchers. 20 expired without lease-up, or 36%. Of the 35 vouchers that leased up, only 13 leased in the Town of Amherst. 6 leased in our extended jurisdiction (which includes Hadley, South Hadley, Belchertown, and Granby). The remaining 16 leased in other areas like Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, Easthampton, etc.
- In 2018, we issued 15 vouchers. 3 expired without lease-up, or 20%. Of the 12 that leased up, only 3 leased in the Town of Amherst. 3 leased in our extended jurisdiction, and the remaining 6 leased in Springfield, Holyoke, and Greenfield.

Even after waiting as much as five years on a waitlist resident still struggle to be placed in housing in Amherst according to this data. Sid raised the question what support system there is to assist individuals once they receive a voucher. Nancy shared that AHA does not have the people power to provide such support. They do provide resources (lists) of landowners and management companies. John referenced an experimental program in Seattle that provided voucher holders with a "housing navigator" who had access to cash to assist with first, last, and deposit and who assisted with landing a rental. Additionally, for

landlords there was a loss mitigations fund. Program was very successful – 54% were placed in “high-opportunity” zones vs. 14% who did not participate in the program.

Trust members identified two problems: 1) non-voucher holders who are priced out and could use a local-voucher program to stay in their homes 2) voucher recipients who cannot find a housing in Amherst at the subsidy price level. Nancy shared that the purpose of the Landlord Forum was to educate landlords and explain the opportunities to partner with organizations and voucher programs but also to destigmatize renting to homeless and voucher-holders.

Business

1. Approve minutes from July meeting.

Minutes are adopted as presented by consensus.

2. Discuss steps to initiate exploration of Town-owned Strong Street property for affordable housing.

VOTE: To submit a formal request for land disposition of Strong Street property to the surplus property committee for the purpose of developing affordable housing on the site and permission to begin wetlands analysis.

MOTION: Erica

SECOND: Nancy

VOTE PASSES Unanimously

3. Plan for Fall Housing Forum

John shares his goals for the forum:

- a. To highlight current housing problems in Amherst
- b. To gather support for Affordable Housing Policy
- c. Test support for other initiatives
- d. Update on progress since last forum

Who's the audience? 50-60 people in the past. Homelessness forum. Sponsorships? Location will be Large Activity Room in the Bangs if available with Unitarian Universalist (UU) Community Room as an alternate location. Tentative date set for October 28th.

Trust deliberated and tried to decide how to focus the forum. Results:

- Nate: Materials explaining Trust
- Nancy: eliminate small groups
- Nate: sensitive to share personal experience. Grand standing/attacks.
- Questions for small groups available right from the beginning of the meeting.

4. Discussion of Trust Priorities

- a. Develop CPA-AMAHT joint housing strategy. Next steps: John has sent Town Housing policy to Christine Bestrup, Lynn Griessemer, and Nate Buddington with comments and questions by October 1. Nate says staff can produce projections and debt service numbers. When John meets with Nate about Town Housing Policy John will also raise the better way to utilize CPA funds strategically.
 - i. Develop 5-year Budget Plan
 - ii. Develop annual announcement followed by hearing
 - iii. Rental Housing – Use Trust RFP
 - iv. Local Housing Voucher - develop RFP
 - v. Homeownership subsidy program - develop RFP
 - vi. Renovate existing affordable housing?
- b. Local housing voucher program. Trust members raised – Questions:
 - Is there *de facto* wait list for AHA program?
 - Should we include levels of affordability: Up to 100% AMI?
 - How much are we willing invest in this program?
 - How do we encourage landlord to participate in the program(s)? Landlord “extra damage” insurance – and changing the narrative about the risk of renting to voucher holders.
 - How do we ensure housing is good quality?
- c. Program to support developers implementing Inclusionary Zoning requirements. Next Steps: Talk to DHCD, Potential vendors, CPAC. Help developers place tenants in affordable units. Stronger inclusionary zoning. If an organization like Wayfinders created on application and one waitlist. It is a costly to place a family in a unit. This would streamline the process and could include multiple Towns. Nate and Tom will do further exploration.
- d. Update Trust’s Strategic Plan – With several new members it is important that our plan reflects where we want to go. Trust members asked to consider their top priorities for next meeting.
- e. Discussion of Subcommittees
 - i. CPA-AMAHT –
 - ii. Local voucher – Nancy, Sid, Erica, Rita
 - iii. Housing Policy – Possibly in the future

- iv. Strong Street property development – still early
- v. Strategic Plan –

5. Updates for review and discussion

- a. East Street School. RFP is out with a submission date of October 1. Based on number of applications deadlines could be extended. Town Manager will call review committee together. Erica and Rob were interested in serving.
- b. Draft Town Affordable Housing Policy: Addressed above in 4a.
- c. Affordable Housing Coalition activities: The coalition will work to spread the word about Fall Housing Forum discussed in 3.
- d. Support zoning changes for 40R and Smart Growth planning: Chris Bestrup, Sunnaborg, David Eisen have chosen to focus on a Town Center 40R district—overlay zone. The next step is to plan public meetings. Development of design guidelines that are fitting with the character of Town is important to create buy in from community members. In order to incentivize density, may need to down-zone downtown and allow density through the 40R process.
- e. 132 Northampton Road: Valley CDC is currently working on project eligibility letter (PEL) to DHCD.
- f. Status of Craig's Doors: Gerry Weiss as President of Board has now taken over as interim Executive Director of the shelter. They are working actively to open on time in November.

6. Items not anticipated within 48 hours – None.

7. Public Comments – None.

8. Upcoming Meetings

Housing Forum Planning—Thursday, August 15, 2PM, Bangs Garrabrants Room
Homelessness Subcommittee – Friday, August 30 8:30AM,
Coalition – Tuesday, August 20, 6:30 PM, Bangs 101
Trust—Thursday, September 12, 7 PM, Town Hall

Adjourned 9:20PM.

Models for transitional housing for persons who are homeless

Tent City/Encampment

There are many such campgrounds around the country. What follows is one example that has been in operation for over a decade.

Camp Hope (Las Cruces, New Mexico) is an alternative transitional living project, for the homeless, in the form of camping. It is located on the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope (MVCH) campus and is an alliance of agencies that address homelessness in Las Cruces. The tent city can house 50 people that would otherwise be on the streets, providing them a safe place to seek direct services, healthcare, and find jobs and housing. Camp Hope has provided the homeless with the opportunity to be right next to all the Direct Services the agencies on the MVCH campus provide.^[2]

The camp was founded in November 2011 with temporary permission from the city of Las Cruces. The camp was supposed to disband in March 2012, but there was no funding available to build another shelter and the City Council stated that the tent city benefited the city. In 2013, with help from engineering students from New Mexico State University, the site was rezoned as a planned unit development (PUD) that sanctioned a permanent campground along with a number of other uses on the non-profit's campus.^[3]

More information on the issue of Encampments can be found here -

<https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/ending-homelessness-for-people-in-encampments/> or <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016-national-slides-strategies-for-encampments.pdf>

Safe Haven

This Department of Mental Health service model is an alternative to shelter for individuals whose symptoms of mental illness make it difficult to utilize shelters and may have otherwise been sleeping outdoors. Safe Haven programs are residential in design, transitional in nature (2 years maximum stay), and are targeted for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness. It is considered a low demand/high expectation Housing First Model, though people maintain their homeless status that may prioritize them for future Permanent Supportive Housing options. Treatment adherence to medication regimens, therapy or sobriety/recovery is not required prior to entry, though alcohol or drug use is not permitted on the premises. Services beyond housing include help with benefits, other housing applications, ongoing social support, crisis intervention as needed, as well as assessment and referral to treatment or recovery based services. Staffing is provided 24 hours per day, seven days per week serving up to 12 residents with the goal of stabilization and assistance in transitioning into long-term housing.

Tiny Houses

Tiny houses are safe, weatherproof, and lockable – and the communities are intended to allow residents to reclaim their dignity and get on a path to housing in a supportive village environment that allows residents a role in governance.

Each tiny house has electricity, overhead light and a heater. Each tiny house village has kitchen and restroom facilities, onsite showers and laundry, a counseling office, and a welcome/security hut where donations of food, clothing, and hygiene items can be dropped off. This program can be permanent supported housing if each unit includes its own kitchen and bath. Otherwise it can be Transitional Supportive Housing until its residents are placed in long-term housing. (Low Income Housing Institute)

Program model	Tent City (formal)	Safe Haven	Tiny Houses
Program size	Small, but may be difficult to control	Small, 6-8 rooms plus shared space	Small, 6-12 individual units
Zoning	Requires special permit/zoning change	Requires special permit/zoning change	Requires special permit/zoning change
Property	Private/public	Private	Private
Agency	May require private organization to be responsible for health & safety	Requires private organization to manage site and be responsible for health & safety	Requires private organization to manage site
Staffing	Staff of agencies that serve homeless individuals provide outreach services on site	DMH contractor; Staff on site 24/7	Staff of private organization to manage site
Funding	Fund raising ??? Support Services from funded homeless services projects (e.g. HCH, PATH)	DMH contract Block Grant \$\$ CPA \$\$	Fund raising, Medicaid Billed Services, ACO Flexible dollars, DHCD? ???
Site Requirements	Water-sewer, community room with kitchen, sanitation, on bus route	Water-sewer, community room with kitchen, sanitation, on bus route	Water-sewer, community room with kitchen, sanitation, on bus route
Seasons	Spring-summer-fall	Year round	Year round
Population	Homeless persons	Homeless persons who are DMH-approved	Homeless persons

Housing Forum – Draft Plan 9-9-19

TITLE: The Housing Mess/Quandary/Iam/Squeeze/Crisis in Amherst

DATE: Monday, November 4th, 6:45-9 P.M.

LOCATION: Social Hall, Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst

Goals for the forum

- 1) Highlight current housing problems in Amherst
- 2) Gather support for Affordable Housing Policy
- 3) Test support for other initiatives
- 4) Update on progress since last forum

6:45-7 PM - Welcome and Update on Amherst Housing developments (Paul Bockelman/Dave Ziomek, League rep)

7:00-7:30 – Understanding the Housing Crisis in Amherst (John Hornik)

“Wait-Wait” approach to introducing housing problems; questions drawn from both the Housing Policy paper and the Housing Coalition website; audience participation in responding to questions

Use three individual examples of people shut out of housing in Amherst—which is the true story? All are!!!

7:30-8:00 – State of Housing in the State House (introduction by ?)

Guests: Senator Joanne Comerford and Representative Mindy Domb

- 1) State FY’20 budget increases affecting affordable housing and
 - 2) Pending legislation that will affect affordable housing and that they are supporting
- How (1) and (2) above might affect affordable housing in Amherst.

8:00- 8:45 PM - Possible Housing Forum Breakout Groups (Six?)

Group Name	Description	Action Goals	Possible Facilitators
1. The need for affordable housing in Amherst and for a	If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. Discussion of the need to set housing goals for the Town, what goals	Commitments to advocate for a new Town Policy before Town Council and other committees;	John Hornik

Town Policy to address it	to set, and how to assure that they are implemented.	recommendations on how to shape the policy	
2. Considering regulatory changes to improve housing affordability	Discussion of different regulatory mechanisms that the town could adopt to address problems of housing affordability: zoning changes (e.g., 40R, elimination of single family), mandatory inclusionary zoning, rent control	Priorities for regulatory changes to be recommended to the planning board	Chris Brestrup, Nate Malloy, Rob Crowner, new PB chair
3. The role of the University in influencing housing affordability in Amherst	The Amherst campus is both the largest source of people seeking housing and the largest source of rental units. Discussion of the University's role in affecting local housing costs, new housing development, and housing insecurity	Commitment to advocate for additional private-public partnerships to develop additional housing on campus	
4. Influencing Housing change through Legislative action	Discussion of how to both direct and support the efforts of our State Legislators in seeking change	Commitment to participate in advocacy for housing change at the State level	Jo Comerford, Mindy Domb
5. NIMBY in Amherst: History of Butternut Farm	Discussion of "what are you willing to have in your backyard/what would you like to see in your backyard?"	Commitment to advocate for new affordable housing proposals in Amherst	Connie Kruger, Carol Lewis
6. What can we do to support the Amherst seasonal shelter	Discussion of the current status of the seasonal shelter, problems it faces, and what is needed to assure its continuation. Also add discussion of approaches to transitional housing? Tent encampment, safe haven, tiny houses	Commitment to support the continuation of Craig's Place by specific individual actions, e.g., joining the board, volunteering, raising money	Jay Levy, Gerry Weiss, new Executive Director of Craig's Doors
7. Improving access to affordable rentals in Amherst	Discussion of strategies to improve access to affordable rentals in Amherst: Landlord outreach, information sharing, housing coordination, additional rental subsidies, supports for landlords	Priorities for changes to improve access to be recommended to the Town	Nancy Schroeder, Erin Cassidy
8. Addressing the disappearing families			

with school-age children in Amherst			
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8:45-9 PM. Reports back and wrap-up.