



**AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
PUBLIC MEETING**

**Thursday, January 9, 2020
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.**

In Attendance

Members: John Hornik, Carol Lewis, Erica Piedade, Rob Crowner, Nancy Schroder, Tom Kegelman, Sid Ferreira, Paul Bockelman, William Van Heuvelen (9)

Staff: Rita Farrell, John Page

Guests: Planning Board Member Janet McGowan, Janet Keller of the Amherst Community Land Trust, Maura Keene, Donna Cabana of Valley Community Development Corporation (CDC).

Prepared by John Page.

Meeting called to order at 7:05PM.

1. Announcements — None.

2. Approve Minutes from December Meeting

Corrections: – Add the word “review” after “Committee is convened to” under item 10a. Evaluation of East Street School proposal submissions. Change “Pamela Rogers, Executive Director of the Amherst Housing Authority” to “Pamela Swartz, Director of the Western Mass Network to End Homelessness” under item 5. Discussion of Developing a Plan to Increase Access to Affordable Units.

**VOTE: To approve 12/12/19 meeting minutes.
Minutes approved unanimously as corrected.**

3. Discussion and presentation of CPA Community Housing Proposals

a. Valley CDC homeownership request presented by Donna Cabana

Donna Cabana of Valley CDC presented and explained their proposal. Trust members inquired about the program’s previous success, restrictions on resale, recapture strategy, homeowner’s lending limitations, conversion of condos, and outreach specifically to Town employees. Donna provided detailed answers including examples from previous clients’ experiences. When asked the greatest challenge to the success of her program, Donna explained how the extremely competitive nature of Amherst’s housing market makes it

difficult to secure-family homes citing the ability of property management companies and individuals to purchase properties quickly above asking price as soon as they enter on the market.

The full proposal is available in the Trust's January 9, 2020 packet, and online at www.amherstma.gov/929/Community-Preservation-Act-Committee. Donna sought a letter of support for the Valley CDC's homeownership program.

VOTE: To support Valley CDC's request for Community Preservation Act (CPA) community housing funds for their First Time Homebuyer Program/Mortgage Subsidy Assistance Program

MOTION: Carol

SECOND: Erica

VOTE PASSED 8-0-1 with Town Manager Paul Bockelman abstaining.

b. AMAHT Consulting Services

c. AMAHT Project Funding

AMAHT's CPAC proposals were discussed at December 12, 2019 meeting. John said he received specific questions from CPAC regarding the proposals and had provided CPAC with responses.

4. Subcommittee Report

a. Improving Access to Affordable Housing

The subcommittee on improving access met on January 6, 2020. Carol, Erica, Nancy, Will, Rita, John Hornik, and John Page were present. They examined their committee charge and added "in the context of existing support services." Their strategy is to identify the gaps beginning with what is available. Next meeting is Monday, February 10, 2020 to discuss existing services and resources. The next step will be contacting organizations to answer questions about the mission and work of their organization.

5. Updates

a. East Street School site – Need to Reissue RFP

A single proposal was submitted and did not meet the minimum requirements of the RFP. Nonetheless, reviewers recommend that the RFP be reissued and that any further review would occur without prejudice to initial bidder, Valley CDC.

Valley cited the following reasons for not submitting a complete proposal: number of critical questions remained unanswered for example the current state of culvert and asbestos on the site. Their final submission was unsatisfactory and incomplete by their own admission.

Carol asked whether we need to make changes to the RFP and would affordability requirements be changed. John maintained that while expectations should remain the same, the projects feasibility is dependent on the costs associated with wetlands and asbestos. Tom stressed additional outreach citing just one bidder. Rita raised whether the Trust do could further site analysis to provide to bidders. John confirmed that it is certainly possible to do site analysis, suggesting the Trust do asbestos analysis, if an existing asbestos study cannot be located.

b. 132 Northampton Road – PEL to be submitted in late January.

Joanne Campbell and Laura Baker of Valley CDC reported an update to Town Council on Monday, January 6, 2020. Valley intends to publish a supportive service plan when submitting PEL. When submitted it will be published on the Town’s Planning Department website. There is a 30-day public comment period.

c. 40R Forum

Reflecting on the 40R, John summarized the December 19 meeting and the Trust discussed the merits of the proposed 40R district and specifically the built-in incentive structures as they applied to the BG and BL zones included in the proposed downtown district. John explained the next step is that consultants would draft 40R bylaw with planning staff to be completed sometime in February.

6. Discussion of Legislative Issues

a. Support for legislation on eviction issues

John explained two pieces of legislation which Pamela Swartz, Director of the Western Mass Network to End Homelessness, identified as critically important for those faced with eviction and sought a letter of support from the Trust for: first An Act Promoting Housing Stability and Homelessness Prevention providing the right to counsel in evictions, and second An Act Promoting Housing Opportunity and Mobility through Eviction Sealing (HOMES) regarding eviction record sealing. A letter from Pamela Swartz is included in the December 12, 2019 packet.

Nancy, Will, and Erica shared their work experiences with eviction cases including how children and families can be permanently affected. Tom raised the issue of a chilling effect on small landlords. John confirmed that this legislation includes counseling for small landlords.

VOTE: To empower the Chair to write a letter of support for An Act promoting housing stability which provides the right to counsel in housing court and An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES) which includes language

acknowledging the small landlord support to be sent to our state delegation and Town Council.

MOTION: Will

SECOND: Sid

VOTE PASSED unanimously.

On the topic of renter protections, Erica asked what the process is for inspecting rental properties in Amherst. Paul explained that most rentals complete self-inspection when applying for a rental permit and any follow-up is complaint-based.

b. Safe Haven Program

Jay Levy of Elliot Community Human Services explained the Safe Haven Program. A safe haven model is a low-demand, high-service housing that is staff 24/7. Program funded by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and administered by non-profits. Only one safe haven in Western Mass. Forerunner of the housing first model. Aspirational goal of having one in every county. Jay argues that this type of program meets currently unmet needs and fulfills the Trusts goals of meeting housing needs at every-level. Elliot Service's letter is included in the January 9, 2020 packet. Jay asked for a letter of support from the Trust to members of the legislature to fund this program.

VOTE: To empower the Chair to write a letter of support for the funding Elliot CHS Homeless Services—Western MA PATH program.

MOTION: Tom

SECOND: Will

VOTE PASSED unanimously.

c. Housing Choice

Trust decided they need more detailed information on the legislation to have a rigorous discussion. John will bring materials on H.3507 – An Act To Promote Housing Choices to a future meeting for discussion.

7. Additional planning for future projects

a. Strong Street Property — No Update.

b. Hickory Ridge — Paul shared that the Town Council is seeking a complete community planning process for the utilization of that location when property is acquired. Trust members agreed that part of that conversation should be the consideration of the development of affordable housing. Nate advocated for being proactive in envisioning what possible affordable housing uses could and should be there.

c. Amherst College property proposed for DPW — Paul confirmed that the property is no longer in consideration for a DPW site, saying that the Town is

in continued conversation with Amherst College about uses for the parcel. Tom cautioned about taking on new property before seeing the East Street School project to completion.

8. Public Comment — None.

9. Items not anticipated within 48 hours

10. Upcoming Meetings

- a. Housing Advocacy Coalition—January 21, 6:30 PM
- b. Next AMAHT Meeting —Thursday, February 13, 7 PM

Adjourned 9:00PM.