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**AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST**  
**PUBLIC MEETING**  
**Thursday, October 15, 2020**  
**7:00 PM**

**Virtual Zoom meeting. Video recording available at:**  
[https://youtu.be/h\\_hJx4Q4pJ8](https://youtu.be/h_hJx4Q4pJ8)

**IN ATTENDANCE**

**Members:** Paul Bockelman, Rob Crowner, Sid Ferreira, Francis Goyes Flor, John Hornik, Tom Kegelman, Carol Lewis, Erica Piedade, Will Van Heuvelen (9)

**Absent:** None

**Staff:** Nate Malloy, Rita Farrell, John Page

**Guests:** Janna Tetreault of Community Action Pioneer Valley, Hwei-Ling Greeney of Amherst Community Connections and Maura Keene

Prepared by John Page.

Meeting called to order at 7:02PM.

**1. Announcements**

John marked the passing of Maurianne Adams, professor emeritus at UMass College of Education and an advocate for affordable housing and housing preservation.

Then he introduced the newest member of the Trust, Francis Goyes Flor, an urban planner and architect originally from Quito, Ecuador. She is currently a special assistant to Chrystal Kornegay, the Executive Director of Mass Housing Finance. Prior to that, she worked for the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. She brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm to the Housing Trust. Francis shared that she started in Amherst as a student ten years ago and is back as a professional and is a renter. She is passionate about housing inside and outside of her work. Trust members and staff also introduced themselves.

John noted that this will be a two-part meeting, conducting regular business until about 8:30PM and then will reconvene in Executive Session. Only Trust members can attend this session, which Nate has set up as a separate Zoom meeting.

**2. Review Minutes from September 10** — Minutes from the September 10, 2020 of the Trust meeting were approved by consensus as submitted.

### **3. Progress Report of Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

Janna Tetreault from Community Action, Pioneer Valley outlined the changes made to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program in Round 2. Round 2 used an online pre-application and then a staff person at Community Action follows up with a phone call, schedules an appointment and walks them through the application. CAPV will be printing and giving flyers to the Amherst Survival Center to distribute rather than simply sending out a digital file. Janna reported receiving 63 pre-applications online. 4 approved in round one and seeking another round of assistance. 29 are in process and have not been completed yet.

Janna noted that Community Action reached out to the applicants in Round 1 whose application was incomplete — 10 have already made appointments. Only 24% of Round 2 applicants report being behind in their rent. Languages other than English and Spanish spoken in the household identified in the applications were Korean and Swahili. When asked where they heard about the program, they identified hearing from their landlord, from Amherst Community Connections, from Facebook, and the Town of Amherst website. John asked if the any applicant had identified the schools as a source of hearing about the program. Janna said no one reported the schools as their source yet.

Francis asked what happens after the 3-month period (max coverage in Amherst's Rental Emergency Assistance Program) and whether CAPV is referring the applicants to other services such as RAFT or the CDC/federal eviction moratorium resources. Janna assured Trust members that they are referring applicants to several other programs. Nate noted that Amherst Community Connections and Family Outreach of Amherst will help applicants apply to this and other programs. Erica noted that Saturday, October 17 is the end of the eviction moratorium and it does not appear an extension is likely. Janna predicted that in the next six weeks, CAPV will see more applicants to the program once the Massachusetts moratorium ends.

Francis also asked if CAPV is considering providing the pre-application in other languages. Janna reported that if an applicant calls to ask for help particularly with a language barrier, CAPV has a subscription to the Language Line and can quickly have materials translated.

Nate asked if, since the Trust chose to expand the program to cover renter rears for tenants with housing vouchers, did any applicants utilize this new opportunity. Janna reported that one applicant in Round 2 was already utilizing a housing voucher.

Janna noted that a possible barrier continues to be documenting a COVID-related loss of income. Two examples Janna provided were an applicant who lost their job prior to COVID and as a result of COVID are struggling to re-enter the workforce and another who as a result of COVID and school closures is responsible for childcare and therefore cannot back to work. Nate noted that some grants use a self-declaration method, where applicants simply legally affirm a COVID-related loss of income. Nate and Janna will meet next week to discuss using a simple affirmation method. John, Sid, and Carol all shared their support of a broad definition of COVID-related loss of income

even if it's secondary. John reiterated that Round 2 has been open for over 4 weeks and the funds are far from exhausted.

Nate posed the question of why the program has not received more applicants, even though not all would necessarily be eligible, the number of people seeking this out remains low and asked whether tenants are applying for RAFT instead of this local program. Key stakeholders identified as possible referral points to get more households to apply were the Amherst Survival Center, Community Legal Aid, and the public schools.

#### **4. Review and Discuss Community Preservation Act (CPA)— Community Housing Proposals**

Nate explained the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee and history of housing proposals. Nate noted that CPAC typical has about \$1 Million to allocate and there is more than twice that amount be requested this fiscal year.

Hwei-Ling, Founder and Executive Director of Amherst Community Connections, described her Supportive Housing CPA proposal. Her submission:

##### Supportive Housing, Phase III- Amherst Community Connections

- a. Budget
- b. Eligibility Criteria and Documentation
- c. Support Services Plan

Since 2016, ACC has received CPA funding. This year's proposal expands the previous requests 3 housing vouchers to 4-6 vouchers due to the increased need due to COVID-19. Hwei-Ling explained her program's track record of success. Over the past three years, she explained, ACC has had 23 residents have been housed and received weekly services. 17 individuals have graduated from the program. 14 have received permanent housing vouchers. Furthermore, Hwei-Ling detailed the challenges of serving the those that are experiencing homelessness including disability, substance abuse and mental health concerns, problematic housing history, financial debt, and/or criminal records. She emphasized the wrap-around services that ACC provides and how wellness and healthcare are key to successful housing formerly homeless individuals. In 6 to 9 months, she explained, individuals can move successfully through the program and into permanent housing.

John opened the discussion to questions from Trust members. Tom expressed gratitude for the work Hwei-Ling has done over many years, characterizing her work as courageous and

diligent. Carol reiterated the thanks and asked Hwei-Ling how COVID has affected the ability of ACC to do their work.

Hwei-Ling explained that there are two teams – one working remotely via computer and phone and then a hands-on team in-person at the center. This hybrid model has enabled them to maintain the same level of service. She noted that over 500 unique individuals have come through the center this year and that virtual/tele-health has expanded access for so many. Erica stressed how this proposal meets a component of the Trust’s mission — transitioning individuals out of homelessness. She appreciated how concrete this proposal’s impact was and stressed the importance of the wrap-around/one-stop-shop housing first model which Hwei-Ling uses. John shared similar sentiments applauding ACC’s work and specifically the long-standing relationships that Hwei-Ling has built, established herself as a person chronically homeless individuals can trust.

Hwei-Ling described the important step of securing housing first. It is critical, she explained, to house a chronically homeless individual even without income first so that they can *then* apply for social Security or Veteran’s Benefits or apply for a job etc. Addressing a common question, she receives, Hwei-Ling clarified that their program does not have a minimum income requirement. Requiring a minimum income would exclude the individuals who need these services the most, she explained.

John transitioned the conversation to confirming Trust support of this proposal.

**VOTE: To empower the Chair to recommend Amherst Community Connection’s Supportive Housing proposal to CPAC**

**MOTION: John**

**SECOND: Carol**

**VOTE PASSES, 8-0-1** (*Bockelman – Abstain, Crowner – Y, Ferreira – Y, Goyes – Y, Hornik – Y, Kegelman – Y, Lewis – Y, Piedade – Y, Van Heuvelen – Y*).

Next, John outlined the Trust’s two requests for funding to the CPA Committee submitted prior to this meeting (due to the 10/12/20 deadline) without the Trust’s review and approval. However, John explained, the Trust can now review and decide whether to withdraw or approve the applications. Additionally, he noted, the Trust can amend the proposals.

The submissions:

- Project Funding- Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, Town of Amherst
  - a. Budget

- b. [What Is AMAHT?](#)
- c. [Emergency Rental Assistance Announcement, Round 2](#)
- d. [Action Plan](#)
- o. [Consulting Services](#) - Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, Town of Amherst
  - a. [Budget](#)
  - b. [What Is AMAHT?](#)
  - c. [Program Guidelines and Application Form](#)
  - d. [Proposed Policy](#)

First the Trust discussed the consultant support. John summarized the request for \$20k to be able to continue to contract with consultant Rita Farrell. The proposal outlines past work, as well as ongoing and anticipated new work. John asked for questions, comments, or any changes from the Trust members.

Rob asked why the Trust separates the two community housing requests and thereby limit the use of funds rather than have one larger request. John explained that the delineation was made at the request of the CPAC. Nate clarified that the second proposal for \$800K for housing development support could be used for consulting services as well.

**VOTE: To accept the AMAHT consulting services application to CPAC, as submitted.**

**MOTION: John**

**SECOND: Carol**

**VOTE PASSES, 8-0-1** (*Bockelman – Abstain, Crouner – Y, Ferreira – Y, Goyes – Y, Hornik – Y, Kegelman – Y, Lewis – Y, Piedade – Y, Van Heuvelen – Y*).

Then John turned to the second Trust request to CPA this cycle. John summarized the request for \$800K for development of affordable housing to be used for local contribution to construction costs, purchase of property, evaluation of property for suitability for development, and “alternative uses” such as the emergency rental assistance program.

John noted that this request is more than previous years due to an upcoming project which will be discussed in executive session. He also noted that in the past, the Trust’s requests for housing development support fund have been funded at approximately 50% and that overall, the CPA Committee has strongly investing in community housing proposals.

John emphasized that like with the Emergency Rental Assistance and is integral to the advantage to having a Trust, is to have capital to act quickly and will articulate the urgency of that need to the CPA Committee.

**VOTE: To accept the AMAHT project funding for housing development support application to CPAC, as submitted.**

**MOTION: John**

**SECOND: Francis**

**VOTE PASSES, 8-0-1** (*Bockelman – Abstain, Crouner – Y, Ferreira – Y, Goyes – Y, Hornik – Y, Kegelman – Y, Lewis – Y, Piedade – Y, Van Heuvelen – Y*).

## 5. Update on State Legislation

Will noted the most pressing legislative or government issue is end of the Eviction Moratorium and the Governor's Eviction Diversion Initiative. As explained on the [Commonwealth's website](#): \$171 million total commitment in FY21, with \$112 million of new funding to support new and expanded housing stability programs during the remainder of the fiscal year. Key highlights:

- \$100 million in emergency rental assistance through RAFT.
- Up to \$12.3 million to provide tenants and landlords with access to legal representation and related services prior to and during the eviction process, as well as community mediation to bring tenants and landlords together to find a resolution.
- Nearly \$50 million for post-eviction rapid rehousing.

Most stakeholders view this as inadequate to stem the tide of coming evictions, Will noted. He further explained that there are two bills before the Legislature that would extend the eviction moratorium:

- [H. 4624](#) — An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID19 Emergency
- [H. 5062](#) — An Act providing for an extension of the COVID-19 eviction and foreclosure moratorium

Will highlighted [S. 2918/H.4878](#) — An Act to guarantee housing stability during the COVID-19 emergency and recovery. Will also noted outstanding bills in the Legislature which the Trust has expressed support for:

- [S.913/H.3456](#) — An Act to ensure right to counsel in eviction proceedings
- [S.824](#) — An Act promoting housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing (HOMES)

Will also shared that on June 24, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed a \$1.1 billion COVID-19 response supplemental budget for FY2020 ([H.4802](#)). CHAPA and elsewhere are advocating for the Trust to disperse the fund as soon as possible.

Erica shared that one initiative municipalities can do at the local level is housing authorities can implement local eviction moratoriums for their properties. Francis suggested identifying largest local landlords and provide them with all the resources for their tenants to prevent moratorium which is in the interest of both the tenant and the landlord.

Will explained that a tangible advocacy action item would be to write Governor Baker, House Speaker DeLeo, and Senate President Spilka to let them all know how important continuing the eviction moratorium is, as well as proving support for financially stressed individuals and families. John reminded members to copy our representatives, Senator Comerford and Representative Domb on your notes so they are aware of your advocacy and can leverage it.

John noted that the Trust & Town Council have written and supported the right to counsel legislation, however, individuals Trust members can send to their leaders, as well as advocate for any or all the legislation which was highlighted tonight.

**VOTE: To empower the chair to write a letter requesting for the dispersal by the Governor of housing assistance funds included in the FY2020 Supplemental Budget.**

**MOTION: Will**

**SECOND: Erica**

**VOTE PASSES unanimously, 9-0-0** (*Bockelman – Y, Crowner – Y, Ferreira – Y, Goyes – Y, Hornik – Y, Kegelman – Y, Lewis – Y, Piedade– Y, Van Heuvelen– Y*)

## **6. General Updates:**

### **a. Trust Strategic Plan Review**

Erica described the strategic plan as accurate and comprehensive noting some changes may be necessary to update it. She also pointed out an annual planning meeting is highlighted in strategic plan. Rita shared the Erica re-read the strategic plan and having now been on the Trust for a while now, and it made more sense than their initial reading. They requested John send out a copy prior to the next meeting to make for a rich discussion and commit at least 45 minutes to discussing it at the next meeting.

### **b. Reconvening Improved Access to Rental Housing Subcommittee**

Rita will reconvene the Subcommittee on Improving Access. Francis noted the upcoming Housing Navigator workshop – calling the tool “Zillow for affordable housing.” Erica, Carol,

John, and John had surveyed agencies on the impediments to low- and moderate-income people accessing affordable housing. Nancy Schroder will continue as an ad hoc member of this committee and Will will join the subcommittee.

**c. East Street Site Analysis**

Nate explained that the wetlands consultant is bringing their wetlands delineation to the Conservation Commission for approval. There is concern that the culvert across the midsection of the property that has failed. Nate has received quotes back for hazardous materials and said a contract would be out next week. Nate also raised the issue of commenting on a preference for keeping or demolishing the building in a new RFP and questioned whether it was wise to submit a demo application to Historical Commission prior to securing the developer for the site.

**d. Strong Street Analysis**

Nate had nothing new to report. Wetlands consultation will occur soon. He is also discussing the feasibility and ease of utilities hook-ups for the site with the department of Public Works.

**e. ZBA Review of Amherst Studio Apartments (132 Northampton Rd)**

John attended the 10/7/20 meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and shared that two Amherst College faculty who have opposed the project spoke in favor of it with the condition that Valley be required to meet the requirements of its social services plan. John noted that the ZBA was meeting concurrently to this Trust meeting (10/15/20). The ZBA is in the process of deliberating the final list of conditions to be included with the approval of the Comprehensive Permit requested. Local preference will be used in initial round of applicants seeking to live at 132 Northampton Road. Town Attorney confirmed that efforts to implement a perpetual local preference at this property have been rejected. The Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) expressed that they would not accept the 40B application if the project required perpetual local preference.

7. **Public Comments** — None.
8. **Items not anticipated within 48 hours** — None.
9. **Motion to Move to Executive Session**

John moved that the Housing Trust end the regular business portion of the meeting and reconvene in Executive Session. The reason for the Executive Session is to consider the purchase of real property for development of affordable housing. The chair declares that





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an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Housing Trust. Only Trust members and Town staff may participate.

**VOTE: To move to Executive Session.**

**MOTION: John**

**SECOND: Carol**

**VOTE PASSES unanimously, 9-0-0** (*Bockelman – Y, Crowner – Y, Ferreira – Y, Goyes – Y, Hornik – Y, Kegelman – Y, Lewis – Y, Piedade – Y, Van Heuvelen – Y*)

Regular meeting ended at 9:02 PM. Trust members and staff entered executive session.

Upcoming Meetings:

- Wednesday, October 14, Fourth Town Forum on 40R Zoning proposal, 6:30 PM via Zoom, <https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/88562506992>
- Thursday, October 15, MHSA webinar: **Individual Homelessness in a COVID-19 World Part III: The Growing Crisis of Unsheltered Homelessness** with Jay Levy, Register here: <http://info.rasky.com/mhsa-homelessness-covid19-0-0>
- Tuesday, October 20, Housing Coalition Meeting, 6:30 PM via Zoom
- Tuesday, October 27, 2-3 pm, Introduction to the Housing Navigator - Register here: [https://www.tfaforms.com/4634263?tfa\\_1=Housing%20and%20Real%20Est%20ate%20Peer%20Group%20Ad-Hoc%20Meeting%20on%2010/27/20&tfa\\_2=2020-10-27&tfa\\_4=Zoom%20Meeting&tfa\\_12=7013s000000JmoZ&tfa\\_3=2:00%20p.m.%20to%203:00%20p.m.](https://www.tfaforms.com/4634263?tfa_1=Housing%20and%20Real%20Est%20ate%20Peer%20Group%20Ad-Hoc%20Meeting%20on%2010/27/20&tfa_2=2020-10-27&tfa_4=Zoom%20Meeting&tfa_12=7013s000000JmoZ&tfa_3=2:00%20p.m.%20to%203:00%20p.m.)
- Thursday, November 12, Housing Trust, 7 PM via Zoom