

AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
Thursday, July 9, 2015
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

Attendance

Connie Kruger, Jeff DeSantis, John Coull, Tom Kegelmann, Jan Dizard
Absent: TracyLee Boutilier, Caroline Murray

Guests

Staff Nathaniel Malloy (liaison)

Announcements

Staff announced that in 6-8 weeks the North Amherst Community Farm (NACF) could transfer a building lot to the Amherst Community Land Trust (ACLT). ACLT applied for and received approximately \$95,000 to purchase the lot for the construction of affordable duplex. Habitat for Humanity will construct the housing.

Tom said that he read an interesting article in the Atlantic News about the challenges of creating affordable housing and of the importance of having a proactive community that supports affordable housing. Butternut Farms in Amherst was featured in the article.

Minutes

Minutes from May 2014 were approved as submitted. The vote in favor was 4-0-1.

Consultant Scope of Work

There was general discussion about how a consultant could help the trust formulate a strategic plan and become more active in the community. It was decided that the trust will first review existing resources and start to define its role in town. a preliminary goal was set to have a draft scope of work for review at the trust's October meeting.

Town Business

Staff said that many boards and committees have vacancies that need to be filled, and members could encourage residents to apply.

Staff noted that the Town Gown Task Force will be starting their meetings soon and the trust should stay aware of their actions.

Review of Reading Material

Members discussed the reading material (housing studies, guidebooks and reports) and asked how the trust would coordinate its efforts with the other funds and organizations in Amherst. There was agreement that the trust could help increase the supply of affordable housing—through acquisition, development, with partners, offering limited financing and other

mechanisms. The exact role of the trust will need to be determined and made clear to the community. It could operate like a non-profit bank or institution that accumulates resources and partners to help developers and property owners undertake projects.

It was noted that the trust is a public body and could help the Town by assessing properties and doing research for housing projects. It could also help the Town solicit developers for projects and could act as a consultant coordinator, managing projects and helping them receive local support.

The Trust discussed the methods it could use to raise funds, but said that the price of land and housing development is a limiting factor in Amherst. The trust could raise capital through zoning and CPA, but would need significant funds to actually purchase a property.

The trust could also establish partners who could help with the development of affordable housing, either through financial contributions, expertise, consulting, etc.

It was asked whether new housing in Amherst would attract current residents who would move within town, or residents from neighboring communities who work in Amherst. The trust asked what types of employment could also be increased in town to be able to support more housing. Although affordable housing may help some move up the economic ladder, often it is a solution itself. In Amherst, many households make more than the levels used defined low and moderate income, so that the housing the trust may help create is not capital "A" affordable by state or federal standards.

The trust agreed it would consider which developments in town and the region would be helpful to visit or use as case studies to help learn what affordable housing looks like and how it is managed.

Members noted that increasing density in appropriate areas could help increase the supply of housing and could be used to encourage a mix of unit sizes that is targeted to a range of households. It was agreed that the students skew the market, increasing the cost of housing beyond many residents.

After briefly discussing the Housing Production Plan and Comprehensive Housing Market Study, the trust noted that there are a few missing components to Amherst's housing market, mostly affordable SRO units (with support services) and affordable homeownership. The studies also made clear the pressing need for more housing for young families, the elderly, and those who need support services. There is a need for transitional units to help people move into permanent housing.

September Housing Forum

The trust agreed by consensus to co-sponsor the housing forum on September 30th being organized by the Housing and Sheltering Committee. The trust said it would like to develop a flyer and information to be presented at this meeting.

Summary of Potential Roles for AMHT

- Provide a knowledgeable resource to Town administrators, town residents and affordable housing advocates on the town's housing needs and potential models of affordable housing
- Advocate for a better public understanding of the unmet housing need in Amherst and the potential for more affordable housing
- Encourage and support developers of affordable housing by supporting projects—supporting projects through the permitting process, with funders, at Town Meeting, etc.
- Trust can act as an agent of the Town to help review affordable projects, develop RFPs for affordable housing development projects
- The Trust can accept donations of land and money to help support affordable housing projects
- The trust can set affordable housing goals for the Town that synthesize the existing plans and resources—these would be realistic goals not tied to state standards.

Next Meetings

August 13

September 10