

Amherst Coalition to Advocate for Affordable Housing  
Bangs Center South Meeting Room  
December 18, 2018

Attendees: Shalini Bahl-Milne, Paul Bracciotti, Alisa Brewer, Elisa Campbell, Kathy Campbell, Bruce Coldham, Keirsten Deater-Deckard, Susan DeGrave, Whitney Demetrius, Sara Duncan, Chad Fuller, John Hornik, Walt Kohler, Jim Linfield, Laura Reichsman, George Ryan

Persons interested, but unable to attend: Maurianne Adams, Kathleen Anderson, Vanessa Cardinale, Darcy Dumont, Rebecca Fricke, Megan McDonough, John Page, Evan Ross, Judith Souweine, Randy Wilburn

The meeting began shortly after 6 PM. There were introductions and an opportunity for participants to note their major housing concerns. They included the following:

- There is a lack of available land for developing affordable housing, but for small projects and large.
- Many cannot afford to live in Amherst; need new laws and regulations to stimulate the production of affordable housing (at least two participants, both employed, live outside of Amherst, and others tenure in Town is threatened by increasing costs).
- Too many homeless people on the streets of Amherst; need to address their housing needs.
- Rental costs automatically exclude many individuals and families; even when the rent may be reasonable, additional fees will make a residence unaffordable.
- Making housing a “right”, not something people can be excluded from.
- Some participants did not express a particular concern, but indicated they were present because they are looking for a way to contribute.

In a summary, there is wide agreement on the lack of sufficient affordable housing in Amherst, both for individuals and families whose resources fall below 80% of “Area Median Income” and whose income may be a bit higher, and are employed as teachers, police, firefighters, and others in local government or who are staff at the University and area colleges.

The group also had a brief discussion of adding to its membership. Among the people and groups for outreach are students, teachers, firefighters, faith-based groups, people who are low income, University and college staff, homeless, as well as increasing racial and cultural diversity. Participants agreed to invite others to future meetings with those goals in mind.

After discussion of the various obstacles to finding affordable housing, the group turned to ideas about advocating for production of affordable housing. There was agreement that more focused discussion on both benefits and obstacles would be a good next step. At the

upcoming meeting, participants are asked to share their knowledge and examples about the following issues:

- Benefits of housing that has been constructed.
- Major obstacles: zoning, financing, land, other...
- Identifying groups that could benefit (e.g., teachers, low income, older/retired persons)
- Costs of building new housing
- Planned projects that were abandoned, but might be reconsidered (e.g., Hampshire College retirement development)
- Stories about individuals and families in need of affordable housing or have benefitted.
- Inclusionary zoning
- Developers' perspectives

Defining these issues is expected to provide us with both talking points for advocacy and ideas we can pursue to change the current situation. This will be the agenda for our next meeting so please be thinking about these issues in advance.

Other notes from the discussion:

Role of Whitney Demetrius as CHAPA staff: please see attached description of our agreement with CHAPA and the CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative.

Landlord Forum, January 9, 7 PM, Bangs Community Center. Please see attached announcement.

Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust generally meets the second Thursday of each month. Next Meeting is January 10, 7-9 PM, location TBA.

Advocacy Opportunities: Participants should become familiar with their Town Council representative so they can personally advocate on issues that come before the Council. Information about these opportunities and those for other groups (e.g., Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Community Preservation Act Committee) will be announced through email.

Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY) FaceBook link:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/yimbypv/?multi\\_permalinks=2467059659988174&notif\\_id=1545318100705572&notif\\_t=group\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/yimbypv/?multi_permalinks=2467059659988174&notif_id=1545318100705572&notif_t=group_activity)

Paul Bracciotti noted that there is a state Home Modification Loan Program that provides generous low interest loans up to \$60k. More information may be obtained by calling Shirley Smith at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 413-781-6045.

**Our Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 15, 5:30-7 PM, location TBA.**

## CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative

CHAPA's Municipal Engagement Initiative seeks to build support for affordable housing production in communities across the Commonwealth. CHAPA staff will work with community groups and municipalities to conduct public education efforts in support of housing production, with an emphasis on affordable housing. Staff will work with communities to develop strategies that work within the context of each community. This initiative will also work in concert with efforts of other organizations providing technical assistance and other support to communities.

While all communities will benefit from public education and community discussions about the need for housing development and how it benefits communities economically, each community is unique in its character, land, zoning, and housing stock. CHAPA will work to implement a community engagement strategy in each individual community that works within each unique environment. CHAPA's community engagement strategy will be based on the collaborative model CHAPA uses at the state level, focusing on building coalitions that work together to address each community's housing challenges. Coalition building will bring together community stakeholders representing local businesses, civic groups, houses of worship, and other groups and individuals that are active in each community.

### Collaboration

In addition to the lessons learned from work on the ground, CHAPA will convene, with DHCD, meetings of statewide organizations working in local communities, through a Technical Assistance Providers Coordinating Group. By coordinating efforts, groups can better serve communities and work together to address challenges.

### Contact:

Dana LeWinter, Municipal Engagement Director Email: [dlewinter@chapa.org](mailto:dlewinter@chapa.org)  
Phone: 617-701-7479  
[www.chapa.org](http://www.chapa.org)

CHAPA Agreement with Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust



President  
*Soni Gupta*

November 1, 2018

President-Elect  
*Amy Schectman*

John Hornik  
Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002

Vice President  
*Charleen Regan*

RE: Municipal Engagement Initiative, Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

Treasurer  
*Joseph Flatley*

Dear Mr. Hornik:

Clerk  
*Naomi Sweitzer*

Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) is pleased to award the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (the Trust) with direct technical assistance through the Municipal Engagement Initiative Program.

Chief Executive Officer  
*Rachel Heller*

The goal of the Municipal Engagement Initiative is to help communities build support for affordable housing production. CHAPA will provide technical assistance to the Trust towards the following collaborative goals:

- Create a broad-based Housing Coalition in Amherst.
- Present to and build support for the Trust Housing Policy from the following Town entities: Town Council, Planning Board, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Department, and other relevant Town Boards and Committees.
- Build support for Trust Housing Policy amongst various civic, non-profit, and educational organizations in Amherst.
- Develop strategies identified by the Trust and the newly formed Housing Coalition to advance specific proposals that will lead to housing development. This may include zoning changes or using municipally owned property for housing development.
- Additional goals, as mutually agreed upon by the Trust and CHAPA.

This work will be led by Dana LeWinter, CHAPA's Municipal Engagement Director, who can be reached at [dlewinter@chapa.org](mailto:dlewinter@chapa.org) and 617-701-7479 and Whitney Demetrius, Municipal Engagement Program Associate, who can be reached at [wdemetrius@chapa.org](mailto:wdemetrius@chapa.org) and 617-631-8562.





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AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING TRUST  
(413) 259-3040  
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December 14, 2018

## AMHERST'S FIRST LANDLORD FORUM: CRITICAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR LANDLORDS

The Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust invites you to its first Landlord Forum on Wednesday, January 9, 2018 at 7 PM at the Bangs Community Center in Amherst. Snow date is Tuesday, January 15, 2018 at 7 PM at the Bangs Community Center.

The Trust appreciates the importance of rental housing in Amherst. Managing rental housing is a serious and complex undertaking. We have planned an interactive and informative question and answer session. Attorney Larry Farber from the firm of Farber & Lindley, P.C., Patrick Kamins from Kamins Real Estate, and representatives from the Amherst Family Outreach Center, the Veteran's Administration, and the Department of Mental Health can answer questions and help you navigate the challenging issues, regulations, and tenants that you deal with every day. These may include:

- Regulations about service animals
- Representative payee and security deposit accounts
- Noise, damages, and behavioral issues
- Lead paint regulations
- Smoking/medical marijuana issues
- Fair Housing Laws and Reasonable Accommodation

In our effort to support landlords of Amherst properties, we would also like to introduce some new resources that improve rental stability and result in more positive landlord outcomes with tenants. For example, using resources such as security payment funds, rental subsidies and residential support services is a win/win for newly housed individuals and families as well as for landlords. One goal of the Affordable Housing Trust is to increase the number of units available to people who have been living without stable housing options. With these additional resources, landlords can enjoy longer term, stable tenancies. The addition of both financial and problem-solving supports for landlords and tenants is a model that is working well in nearby towns.

We hope you will join us in January and begin a productive collaboration among landlords, tenants, and community resources. We have included a list of on-line property management resources in this letter.

If you have questions, please contact Nancy Schroeder [schroedern@amherstma.gov](mailto:schroedern@amherstma.gov).

Sincerely,

John Hornik  
Chair, Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

## PROPERTY MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

- WAYFINDERS/REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY (formerly HAP Housing). [www.wayfindersma.org](http://www.wayfindersma.org) WAYFINDERS OFFERS a wide range of property management workshops, a property management manual, low cost financing for lead paint abatement and individual assistance to landlords. Call John Fisher at Wayfinders at 413-233-1609 or email [landlordservices@wayfindersma.org](mailto:landlordservices@wayfindersma.org).
- “Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods” is a site at [Amherstma.gov](http://Amherstma.gov). It offers information about rental registration and Amherst rental housing regulations such as parking, dumping furniture, and the Nuisance House Bylaw.
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- UMass Off Campus Housing Office. Go to [offcampushousing.umass.edu](http://offcampushousing.umass.edu). Under “Resources” on the home page, go to landlord section, find information about checking references, fair housing, mediation services, crisis assistance, security deposits, statement of condition, tenant rights, etc.
- Guide to Landlord/Tenant Rights from the Massachusetts Attorney General’s office. [www.mass.gov/ago](http://www.mass.gov/ago). Excellent resource for landlords.
- MassLandlords, Inc is a non-profit trade organization for landlords in Massachusetts. Call 774-314-1896 or go to [MassLandlords.net](http://MassLandlords.net).