

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
MINUTES**

THURSDAY, May 4, 2017

6:30 pm – GREAT BARRINGTON TOWN HALL, 334 MAIN STREET

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Cooke, Chairman; Fred Clark Vice-Chairman; Cara Davis; Jonathan Hankin; Samantha Homeyer; John Katz; Bruce Marzotto

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Rembold, Town Planner; Shep Evans, Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Bill Cooke called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

MINUTES

The Minutes of the April 12, 2017 had previously been circulated. Motion by John Katz, seconded by Fred Clark, to approve the minutes as circulated. Unanimous approval.

Bill Cooke distributed a two page outline entitled “**Thoughts after the last meeting**” which served as a stimulus and rough outline for the board’s discussion which followed. (See attached)

The opening question raised was “What does affordable mean?” To which Cara Davis suggested affordable housing is often thought to be that which can be secured by people earning \$10 to \$12 per hour. She indicated that housing partners in her experience such as the CDC or Berkshire Housing think in terms of +/- 60% of the local Median Income as an income standard.

Fred Clark expressed a preference for thinking in terms of an income range rather than a dollar amount per hour. He also felt that the Trust should try not to duplicate what others in the field were doing, and he suggested the idea of developing a matrix of target populations vs. various kinds of affordable housing programs to see where the opportunities were.

Pinewoods in Stockbridge was introduced as an example of a successful project with mixed market rate and affordable units. Three bedroom units are \$1,125 ; two bedroom units are \$950 ; and one bedroom units are \$750.

Jonathan Hankin raised the subject of Co-housing, to which Fred Clark noted that there was a successful co-housing project in North Adams. Cara Davis cited an example of a small assisted care or co-housing project of 10 to 12 units.

Drawing from his “Thoughts after the last meeting”, Bill Cooke indicated that there were several courses of action one might pursue, namely: 1) New affordable rental housing; (2) Providing avenues to home ownership for income qualified people; and (3) Providing financial and/or other assistance to lower income homeowners.

Fred Clark raised the subject of the difficulty of re-purposing structures like the Housatonic School, where there have been many ideas that no one wanted to pursue and very few good ideas that people could get enthused about.

Jonathan Hankin returned to the subject of Co-housing and Fred Clark offered up the Cherry Hill housing community in Amherst as a successful example.

On the subject of annual budget and making an impact on the community, Fred Clark noted that providing “buy downs” could enable the Trust to have multiple impacts with a budget of +/- \$200,000 at \$25,000 to \$50,000 per unit. Cara Davis noted that it would be very important to get dollars committed to the Trust without having to identify specific properties. Bill Cooke expressed a like for not having to build from scratch.

Given that the annual funding available from the CPC has been \$450,000 to \$600,000 and that the big projects are now all committed this year, John Katz suggested that next year the Trust should seek a larger amount.

Turning to the subject of Mission Statement:

Chris Rembold suggested that a Mission Statement might reference other entities already involved in affordable housing.

Cara Davis advocated for a general, broad statement including collaborating with other entities to provide solutions and eliminate stress in the pursuit of affordable housing. She envisioned the Trust playing a part – coordinating and collaborating with others – on a list of organizations that the Trust works with.

Bill Cooke then moderated an interactive drafting process, drawing ideas and suggestions from the board as a mission statement evolved out of the thoughts and conversations of the meeting. In the end, the mission statement, which achieved unanimous approval, was:

“To provide housing options that are affordable to low and moderate income households in Great Barrington”

Fred Clark suggested that at the next meeting the Board should meet with local affordable housing partners to find out what the Trust can do or provide that they cannot.

Cara Davis emphasized that the Board needs to establish its own identity in Town and build support.

It was generally agreed that the Trust could be a provider of funding or an establisher of restrictions or an organizer of opportunities for others to implement. As a finder and holder of land, the Trust can put restrictions on property, but if it must do work on the land it will be subject to bidding out the work and paying prevailing wages – which would make the Trust uncompetitive.

It was agreed that the Board would invite representatives from the various affordable housing groups in the area to come to the next meeting so that the Board may learn ways that the Trust can be valuable to others. It was acknowledged that initially, the Trust can be valuable as a pipeline to the CPC.

PUBLIC SPEAK TIME

NEXT MEETING: June 1, 2017 at 6:30 PM at the GB Firehouse.

ADJOURNMENT

Bill Cooke entertained a motion, which was made by Fred Clark, and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully,

Shepley Evans
Administrator