

**GREAT BARRINGTON  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND (AHTF)  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES  
Friday, December 18, 2020, 6:00 PM  
Remote Meeting via ZOOM conference Call**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chmn. Bill Cooke; Fred Clark; John Katz; Garfield Reed;  
and Larissa Yapple.

**GUESTS & OTHERS:** Jane Ralph, CONSTRUCT; Eileen Mooney; Ed Abrahams; Terry Cowgill; Gina Beligni; Robert Holcomb; Carolyn Valli & June Wolfe, HABITAT for HUMANITY; Jennifer (?); Eric Gabriel;  
and Shep Evans, Administrative Support.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Cooke called the meeting to order at 6:01PM and read Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion by Mr. Cooke, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Reed, to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2020 meeting as circulated. Roll call vote: Unanimous approval.

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Mr. Cooke proposed that he send a letter to the Great Barrington Selectboard recommending their approval of a revised Deed Restriction from the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association that would effectively establish the allowed Maximum Resale Price of the property at 4 Rose Court East as "Affordable" to an appropriately sized household earning 70% of the Area Median Income. **Motion by Mr. Katz, seconded by Mr. Reed to approve Mr. Cook's sending such a letter.** Mr. Cooke read the letter he proposed to send. **Roll call vote: Unanimous approval.**

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Mr. Cooke introduced for consideration the provision of down payment assistance to Ms. Gina Beligni, a recent applicant. Following discussion, **Mr. Clark made a motion, seconded by Mr. Katz, to approve this grant of down payment assistance.** Roll call vote: unanimous approval. Ms. Beligni expressed her sincere gratitude for the assistance, which she had not until recently been aware of as a possibility for her.

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Mr. Cooke introduced Carolyn Valli and June Wolfe of Habitat for Humanity (hereinafter, Habitat) to present to the Board their proposal for development of the Alden property, a copy of which has been posted on the AHTF page of the Town web site.

Habitat's proposal is for 14 to 20 residential units on six and a fraction acres with construction starting in 2022. Prior to the start of construction, Habitat will be conducting research on the supply of and demand for affordable housing in Great Barrington and will begin identifying potential owners for houses. Habitat will be designing and building each residence according to the needs and financial capabilities of identified prospective owner(s) who, alongside skilled professional and volunteer workers, will also be hands-on participants in the building of their own future home. As new residences are completed, Habitat will be the management company for the new neighborhood for the first five years and will teach home ownership skills to each new member of a Neighborhood Association that Habitat will help new owners to form.

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Mr. Clark expressed his thought that the highest priced unit (over \$300,000) cited as an example in Habitat's proposal probably would not be "affordable" His concern was that people who were financially qualified to be candidates for affordable housing would not be financially capable to buy at that price level.

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Ms. Wolfe explained that Habitat works with buyers and produces to the end-price these clients can afford. She reiterated that Habitat will be doing a market study and will scale its plans to fit the needs and capabilities of the affordable housing market in Great Barrington.

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Mr. Clark questioned building 3 & 4 bedroom houses. Why not build 2 bedroom houses?

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Ms. Valli replied, if applicants only want 2 bedroom houses, that is what Habitat will build.

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Mr. Clark asked whether the infrastructure chosen and engineered for the property would support twenty residences.

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Ms. Valli replied that it only makes sense to provide capacity for the maximum possible need.

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Mr. Katz noted that conditions can always change. The Habitat proposal talks about 2, 3 or 4 years from the present. He acknowledged that The AHTF Board needs to trust in Habitat's experience and the Habitat process that has evolved over time.

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Ms. Wolfe summarized: Habitat hopes that the AHTF Board has heard the Habitat process that takes in and builds upon the needs of the community and the end-users. It could be that Habitat will find that volunteer labor and donated materials don't measure up in Great Barrington, and Habitat will have to adjust. It may take longer than we think to complete this project. There could be several added stages of construction.

Ms. Yaple spoke of her family's Arborist business, and wondered whether Habitat had any thought about bringing on an arborist to deal with saving some of the trees on the property. If so, she offered to provide names of arborists who are ready to donate services.

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Mr. Cooke asked whether Habitat is confident that they can attract people for these houses.

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Ms. Valli replied that Habitat already knows some of these people.

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Mr. Clark asked whether we are confident the community is behind this project.

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Mr. Cooke replied that community input is built into the AHTF process.

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Ms. Yaple opined that the Board should make time to receive questions.

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Ms. Valli said that there will no doubt be opportunities to take and respond to all sorts of questions – such as the question about trees.

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Mr. Cooke suggested that the next meeting of the Board should be on January 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM. He acknowledged that Ms. Wolfe and Ms. Valli should probably plan to attend.

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Mr. Katz opined that Habitat has done a good job, "A terrific job."

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**Trustees Speak-None**

**Citizen Speak-None**

**Media Speak-None**

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Mr. Gabriel asked where the proposal could be found.

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Mr. Cooke indicated that the proposal was posted on the website under "Alden Property".

**Adjournment: Hearing no objection, Mr. Cooke adjourned the meeting at 7:24 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,



Shepley Evans, Administrative Support