

GREAT BARRINGTON
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND (AHTF)
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 8, 2022 at 6:30 PM via ZOOM video conference

MEMBERS PRESENT: Fred Clark, Chairman; Bill Cooke; John Katz; Garfield Reed;
Krystyna Kurzyca

OTHERS: Eileen Mooney, Chris Rembold , Shepley Evans.

CALL TO ORDER: **Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM** and read the Governor's March 12, 2020 Order. He announced that all votes during this meeting would be by roll-call.

Mr. Clark welcomed newly appointed Trustee, Krystyna Kurzyca and explained that the agenda for this meeting would be an update on the Trust's programs and projects for the members of the Board including a brief explanation of each for Krystyna's benefit, followed by a discussion of where the Trust may go from here.

Mr. Clark explained that the Trust has a Rental Assistance Program, partnered with Construct, wherein the Trust makes funding available to Construct which in turn provides help to both landlords and tenants in a closely supervised way so as to keep landlords in the rental business and to keep deserving tenants in their homes during the COVID 19 pandemic. The Trust has made a total of \$100,000 available for this very active program of which \$93,000 has been expended to date providing a much needed financial safety net to hundreds of deserving tenants and landlords.

Mr. Clark shared a spread sheet summarizing the financial condition of the Trust and explained the sources and uses of funds. The Town voted to provide initial start-up funding, and most of the Trust's money since start-up has come from grants under the Community Preservation Act.

Mr. Clark also explained the Trust's Down Payment Assistance program, which makes up to \$25,000 down payment assistance grants available to qualified applicants purchasing a home in Great Barrington. To date the Trust has made grants totaling \$99,300 to four qualified home buyers.

The Trust purchased a large parcel of land off North Plain Road in Housatonic and partnered with Habitat for Humanity to produce up to 20 affordable single-family homes in three phases. Engineering work, including preliminary layout of sewer, water, drainage systems and roadways has been substantially completed by White Engineering. Next, the Planned Unit Residential Development permit application will be submitted to the Selectboard and, after receipt of an anticipated Mass Works grant, infrastructure construction could start as early as April 2023. **Mr. Clark** noted the importance of seeing to it that the Town accepts the internal roadway as a "Town Road", thereby ensuring that the Town will maintain the road and homeowners will not be burdened with those extra costs.

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At 40 Grove Street, the Town took the property for taxes, and the town Meeting awarded the property to the Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust solicited proposals for renovation of the house and selected Habitat for Humanity to do the job. Habitat is now in possession and has been advertising for volunteer laborers. Eventually, the house will be sold as an “affordable” residence to a family with no more than 80% of Area Median Income. The house must remain price controlled as “affordable” to all subsequent owners as well.

Looking forward, Mr. Clark said that the Trust Fund wants to work on improving the opportunities for home ownership for single family up to three family houses. The Trust also wants to find ways to extend its reach to all individuals and organizations seeking affordable housing solutions.

Mr. Katz suggested that the Board consider creating a pool of investors to support the affordable housing challenge.

Mr. Clark offered up two questions for Trustees to think about: 1) If the Trust had more money, what would the Trustees like to see? and, 2) How do we make the Trust self-sustaining? In other words, how do we recycle our money so that we can re-invest it in the next project?

Bill Cooke reported a conversation with business people about employee housing wherein a \$600,000 house is bought by three businesses and converted into three \$200,000 condominiums for employees.

Mr. Rembold reported that the Town is exploring many creative ideas, new partnerships or collaborations to find new ways to address the Affordability problem. In answer to a question about foreclosed properties and their being rehabilitated to provide affordability, he noted that sadly many foreclosed houses are not feasibly fixable and many parcels of land taken for taxes are not buildable.

Mr. Clark noted that there was nothing in front of the Board that required a decision at this moment.

He hoped to arrange the next meeting to be on the 2nd Tuesday in April at 6:30 PM.

There being no Citizen or member of the Press seeking to speak, and hearing no objection, Mr. Clark adjourned the meeting at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Shepley Evans
Admin. Support