

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

**Thursday, June 23, 2022, 6:30 PM
Remote virtual meeting by ZOOM.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Fred Clark (Chairman), Bill Cooke, Ananda Timpane, Garfield Reed, Robert Slonaker, Krysia Kurzyca.

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Katz

OTHERS PRESENT: Shep Evans, Eileen Mooney, Carol Bauman

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM and read the Governor Baker's Orders of March 12, 2020 and February 12, 2022. He then introduced Mr. Slonaker, a new member of the Board, and Carol Bauman, the Interim Director of the CDC, saying that the Board is pleased to see new people with new ideas.

Mr. Clark then provided program updates as follows:

40 Grove Street residence: nothing really new. Habitat for Humanity has people working inside the building and is developing a crew of volunteer workers as well.

North Plain Road property: The Trust has paid \$69,000 for engineering and site planning. The Town has applied for a \$2+million dollar grant for infrastructure, and should know if that will be awarded in early October. If awarded, the Trust will put out an RFP for the infrastructure construction to start in the Spring of 2023.

At the CPC, this year the Trust applied for \$200,000 to be used for any of the Trust's programs or projects. This application was recommended by Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and approved at the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Clark noted that the Trust is 5 years old and we have two on-going programs: the Rental Assistance Program working through Construct and the Down Payment Assistance Program for folks that are qualified as earning no more than 100% of this area's median income (AMI). He noted that, in the current real estate market, it is extremely hard to find houses that can be bought/financed with no more than a median family income. Mr. Clark believes the Trust needs to update Realtors, Lenders and Mortgage Brokers on the increase in its qualifying standards to the full 100% of AMI. He reported that Construct sees the need for rental assistance starting to taper off - perhaps because some people are leaving the area.

Going forward, Mr. Clark sees developing new affordable housing as increasingly difficult. He that the Trust should be developing grants or partnering with others who can. Finally, he is not optimistic about the Trust being able to replicate development of larger projects like the North Plain Road property.

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Mr. Reed raised the question of promoting or facilitating the development of Alternative Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Mr. Cooke agreed that the Trust can encourage ADUs.

Mr. Clark reminded that there is “one time” ARPA money from the Federal Government to help mitigate the negative impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. Townspeople have expressed a desire to prioritize use of these funds for affordable housing. Use of these funds does not require a vote of town meeting. A handful of senior Town managers can make the necessary decisions.

Ms. Timpane said that it sounds like we may have short, medium and long term money, and she asked whether the Board shouldn't think in those terms.

Mr. Clark reminded that the deadlines for applications to the CPC for fiscal 2024 are coming up in September/October and the Board needs to be thinking about the next round of projects for funding now.

Mr. Slonaker asked whether anyone had thought about seeking donations of land or rights to develop land. He is aware that there is unimproved land on the east side of the Housatonic River, accessed off the end of Grove Street, that is/was part of the Searles Castle estate.

Ms. Timpane thought that the Trust should be reaching out into the community to make sure people know of the availability of land and the possible opportunity to create affordable housing. She is interested in the possibility of encouraging construction of ADUs and possibly underwriting part of the cost as a way of stimulating community interest and participation.

Mr. Clark opined that the Trust needs to leverage what it has now to get more affordable units.

Mr. Cooke remarked that it is very expensive to build right now.

Mr. Clark noted that the Trust can run programs; it can make grants; and through advocacy it can make people aware of what it can do to help.

Ms. Timpane suggested that trustees could work together between meetings.

Mr. Slonaker imagined that trustees could meet/work together on line.

Mr. Cooke said no, that it was OK to meet in pairs, but not OK to meet or run the risk of meeting as a “quorum” (4 or more trustees meeting together).

Ms. Timpane said that the board was talking about people who could really benefit from the ability to create an ADU.

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Mr. Cooke suggested that a tax abatement for 10 years on an ADU might motivate people.

Mr. Clark wanted to move on to other ideas like purchased or donated land.

Mr. Cooke suggested that Room Tax Dollars could/should go to the AHTF.

Mr. Clark moved on to the subject of the next meeting, and he proposed the next meeting would be on the third Thursday in July. He suggested that Ms. Timpane and Mr. Cooke put some ideas together for the group to discuss at the July meeting.

Adjournment: Hearing no objection, **Mr. Clark adjourned the meeting at 7:51 PM**

Respectfully submitted,

Shepley Evans
Administrative Support