

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

MINUTES

**Tuesday, November 22, 2022, 6:30 PM
Remote virtual meeting by ZOOM.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Fred Clark (Chmn.), Bill Cooke, Krystyna Kurzyca, Joseph Method, and Ananda Timpane.

OTHERS PRESENT: Amy Turnbull of the American Tiny House Association

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM and read Governor Baker's Orders of March 12, 2020 and July 16, 2022.

Mr. Clark provided an update on the North Plain Road Project. The Town has been awarded a Mass Works Grant for \$3.2 Million which will pay for the infrastructure. Habitat and their engineer are in front of the planning board.

Ms. Timpane asked whether the trust or the town was awarded the grant.

Mr. Clark explained that under the Mass Works Grant program, the Town has to be the recipient. The Affordable Housing Trust is part of the Town. He reported that Habitat held a meeting on November 9th at the Unitarian Church for prospective owners of a house in the North Plain project, explaining the process and the way Habitat works.

Ms. Timpane remarked that the outreach for the project needs to be improved to build awareness.

Mr. Clark reported that he and Mr. Cooke would be meeting with Habitat in the next week.

Mr. Cooke suggested that in the spring, the Post Office can distribute post cards throughout the neighborhood.

Ms. Kurzyca remarked that there are many people who cannot qualify to purchase a house.

Mr. Clark acknowledged that the cost of construction is currently so very high that Habitat may have to seek purchasers that earn as much as 80% or even some at 100% of median income. He also said that the purpose for the meeting with Habitat in the next week is to establish milestones.

In order to achieve the oversight relationship with Habitat he wanted to establish clear and mutually agreed targets to keep the North Plain Road project moving along. The next meeting of

the Board will be on December 20th, and it is important that the Board knows that Habitat is identifying contractors during the winter season when they are booking business for the coming

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construction season. He felt that if Habitat waits until spring to get contractors informed about the project, Habitat could easily lose the opportunity to get construction started in 2023.

Ms. Timpane asked whether at the December meeting the Board could then decide when Habitat should come back and report on their progress.

Mr. Clark opined that since the project has been awarded to Habitat, many of the decisions along the way will be theirs to make. He felt that the oversight role for the Board is to see that Habitat produces the project they proposed. He suggested that the time to invite Habitat back to the Board meeting might best be after they have concluded their permitting discussions at the Planning Board.

It was generally agreed that the project is moving along more slowly than expected and there is a need for more active outreach into the community

Mr. Clark summarized that we will not see houses on the property until 2024, and people may just not be able to get interested in something that far away.

Ms. Timpane agreed, but also said that the prospect of knowing a house will be there in two years might facilitate a couple staying in the area, locating a temporary rental in Pittsfield or some other town and being willing to commute to Great Barrington in the interim.

Mr. Cooke acknowledged that the Habitat model includes having the ultimate owner identified before the house is built and actively engaged in the production of the residence.

Ms. Kurzyca mentioned a motel she has been told about which is for sale in another town. She thought that individual motel units might be renovated and turned into satisfactory small dwelling units.

Mr. Clark agreed and reported that, since the last meeting, Mr. Cooke has identified an opportunity where a residential property in the Pope-Mahaiwe Street neighborhood has been offered to the Trust at a below market price. CDC has proposed to put up the money to renovate and construct three or four modest residential units that could be deed restricted as permanently affordable. Mr. Clark explained that, since the demand for the Trust's down-payment assistance and rent-support programs has dried up during the current rising real estate market, the trust has

money to do the Pope Street project and achieve a very good multi-unit “affordable bang for our buck”.

Mr. Clark also reported that CDC has been offered a commercial building (the Marble Block) with 8 affordable apartments down town, seven of which are currently occupied by local employees. CDC would like to keep the affordable units down town and has requested the

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Trust to help with the down payment. Mr. Clark noted that the Trust has \$200,000 unrestricted funds from CPA.

Mr. Cook made a motion to grant CDC \$100,000 to go toward the Down Payment on the Marble Block. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kurzyca. Discussion followed during which various members clarified their understanding of the proposed transaction.

Mr. Clark reported that CDC is prioritizing this project because there is a worry that, if delayed, the private sector will capture the property.

Ms. Timpane wants some due diligence about what the Trust would get in return for its \$100K.

Mr. Clark reminded that there is a motion and a vote is needed.

Ms. Timpane wanted assurance about governance of the affordability. She had questions about whether CDC would keep all the current tenants, would the Affordable Housing Trust have a role in administering the property. She liked the idea but could not vote in favor without more information.

Mr. Clark suggested that the money be proposed as a loan to CDC which at a later date could be converted into a grant.

Mr. Cook opined that if the Board could arrange a brief meeting with representatives of the CDC to sort out details, Board members might feel more comfortable with the proposed arrangement.

Ms. Kurzyca withdrew her Second

Ms. Timpane proposed a motion that the Trust is in favor of the purchase of the Marble Block

Mr. Clark rephrased the motion: The Affordable Housing Trust views the project for acquisition of the Marble Block favorably and will support the project with its resources.

Mr. Cook seconded the motion. **Unanimous Approval** – by roll-call vote.

Mr. Clark will contact leadership of the CDC to work out a few dates for a meeting.

Mr. Clark shared his screen and reviewed his budget in support of the AHTF application for \$340,000 in the 2024 CPA funding cycle.

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Mr. Method requested that the Board discuss his Tiny House report/proposal before adjourning. He shared his screen and talked through the text of his Tiny House report / proposal.

Mr. Clark thanked Mr. Method, noting that the Board will also hear from Ms. Turnbull and opined that the Tiny House project might be included with the ADU incentive proposal. He introduced Ms. Turnbull and Ms. Timpane who discussed the ADU incentive concept.

Mr. Clark had one final matter he wanted to present before adjourning. He shared on the screen a draft letter to the Chair of the Great Barrington Planning Board suggesting that the Board revisit inclusionary zoning, either mandatory or incentivized, for developments with five or more units. Recent proposals from developers have stated that they would like to provide affordable housing units – but only if the town can provide a sizable subsidy for every below market rate unit. Motion by Ms. Timpane, Second by Ms. Kurzyca, Approved by unanimous roll-call vote.

Mr. Cooke had one last item before adjourning. It was to see if the Board could meet with Construct, CDC and the Housing Authority to explore common interests and consider planning with a more organized, long term perspective. All agreed

Citizen Speak Time: None

Adjournment

Hearing no objection, Mr. Clark adjourned the meeting at 8:12 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Shepley W. Evans
Administrative Support

