

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

Thursday, March 5, 2020, 6:30 PM  
Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chmn. Bill Cooke, Fred Clark, John Katz, Samantha Homeyer,  
Larissa Yapple, Garfield Reed, and Jonathan Hankin (on speaker phone).

GUESTS & OTHERS: Paul Ivory, John McGruer, Deborah Herman, Dan Bailly, Bob Gray, Michelle Loubert,  
Jim Bailly, Carolyn Valli of Habitat for Humanity, June Wolfe of Construct, , (Shepley  
Evans, Administrative Support)

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Cooke called the meeting together at 6:35 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Mr. Katz, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Reed, to approve the minutes of February 6, 2020  
as corrected. Unanimous approval.

Mr. Cooke opened a discussion of his proposal to recommend to the Selectboard that they add an article to the  
Town Meeting Warrant which would allow the Selectboard to donate the property at 40 Grove Street to Habitat  
for Humanity to create an affordable home ownership property.

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Paul Ivory, Grove St. resident, reported that the Historical Commission had determined that the subject property  
was an example of Queen Ann architecture. He asserted that the Grove Street neighborhood was a special  
place and that his hope was that the architecture of the house at #40 Grove Street could be preserved. He felt  
that the neighbors were very willing to consult on this preservation objective. Mr. Evans opined that the  
Glendale Chapel in Stockbridge had been similarly protected with an architectural conservation restriction when  
it was sold, and volunteered to provide a copy of the restriction language in that deed.

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John McGruer, also of Grove Street, asked that a limitation restricting the use of the residence at 40 Grove  
Street to a single-family property.

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Mr. Cooke read the language of his draft letter to the Selectboard (see attached).

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**Motion by Mr. Katz**, seconded by Ms. Yapple, to amend Mr. Cooke's letter to limit the use of the 40 Grove  
Street house to a single family residence, **Unanimous approval.**

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**Motion by Mr. Katz**, seconded by Mr. Clark, to send the amended letter to the Selectboard. **Unanimous  
approval.**

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Mr. Cooke requested that the board approve spending \$156 to continue the AHTF web site. **Motion by Ms.  
Yapple**, seconded by Mr. Clark, to spend \$156 and continue the web site. **Unanimous approval.**

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Mr. Cooke proposed that the board hire Construct to do a feasibility study of the Alden Property. He circulated a proposed agreement (see Limited Consulting Services Agreement, attached) and raised the question whether the consulting fee of \$9,850 should be paid out of the Trust's initial \$15,000 administrative start-up funds or out of \$50,000 of CPA moneys received. **Motion by Mr. Clark**, seconded by Ms. Yaple, to pay such fees out of the Trust's initial \$15,000 administrative start-up funding. **Unanimous approval.**

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**Motion by Mr. Clark** to engage Construct to do the feasibility study as outlined in their proposal. June Wolfe of Construct was asked to spell out the timing of the study completion and the deliverables. She indicated that the study would take about 8 weeks (in time for Town Meeting in May) and that the deliverables would include a project narrative and budget, a proforma sketch plan, a lay-out of project next steps with associated estimated costs, a time line for project implementation, and an initial testing of funding sources to determine the project's acceptability.

Q & A:

Q: Debra Herman of 317 N. Main Street: Why incur costs before buying the property?

A: Mr. Clark: To inform the board's decision whether or not to buy.

Q: Dan Bailly: This is Step #1?

A: Ms. Wolfe: Yes, Construct will also try to anticipate other studies to be done and their costs.

Q: Dan Bailly: Are grants competitive?

A: Yes.

Q: Bob Gray: Is there other land available and have you evaluated it?

A: Yes, we have analyzed all and the average price is about \$109,000 per acre. The Alden land is much more reasonable at about \$35,000 per acre.

Carolyn Valli explained Construct's view of how to go about doing this and other projects in such a way as to build commonality with the surrounding neighborhoods and achieve community buy-in.

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Dan Bailly wanted to know what things were going to cost. He said that he needs to know that the neighborhood won't be negatively impacted, and that there won't be negative impact on the wildlife that lives around us as well.

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Michele Loubert was concerned that the anticipated land use might change as the project is further evaluated. She indicated that, after voting to devote CPA money for affordable housing, it would not be acceptable to subsequently shift and turn the project into creating open space or historic preservation.

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Carolyn Valli indicated that Habitat for Humanity, being a not-for-profit, has the ability to attract other sources of funding from State or local sources as well.

Bob Gray wondered why one cannot go back to the Alden family and secure their agreement to delay closing while the project is studied further. He wanted to know what this entire project will cost the town. The answer was that there is no way to tell until all the studies are done.

Jim Bailly asked: When you buy a house, you get to have a home inspection and percolation test if necessary. Why should one spend all the public's money before we know what the whole project will cost?

Michelle Loubert asked: why not use the \$50,000 of CPA money to do an initial engineering study? Why not do the investigation with the money we have, instead of asking for more money?

Mr. Clark's response was that things have to be done in the right order. Ms. Wolfe advised that there are lots of things one can get done and answers that can be had to many of these questions as one proceeds.

**Mr. Cooke called the question and seconded Mr. Clark's motion to engage Construct to do the feasibility study. Unanimous approval.**

A question was raised whether the AHTF Board would agree to table the vote on CPA funding until the feasibility study is available. Mr. Clark felt that a working session with June Wolfe might be more constructive than a Q&A with the board.

A question was raised whether anyone on the board had done a site visit? Some had done so individually. The property has been on the market for several years. Some had walked into the property with the Community Preservation Committee before their meeting & vote.

The question was raised where the idea of a 39-unit build-out of the Alden property had come from? The answer was that Berkshire Housing prefers at least 35 units in order to get to feasible scale, while Construct and Habitat for Humanity have expressed more flexibility.

Mr. Cooke announced that the next meeting would be on Thursday, April 2, 2020 at 6:30 unless otherwise announced and posted. Ms. Wolfe indicated that she could attend.

**Citizen Speak Time / Media Time: none**

**Mr. Clark made a Motion to Adjourn, seconded by Mr. Katz. Unanimous approval.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Shepley Evans  
Administrative Support