

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

Wednesday, June 17, 2020, 6:30 PM via ZOOM video conference

MEMBERS: Chmn. Bill Cooke, Fred Clark, John Katz, Larissa Yapple, Garfield Reed, and Jonathan Hankin.

OTHERS: June Wolfe and Jane Ralph of Construct, Dan Bailly, Eileen Mooney, Carolyn Valli, Cathy Brandt, Michelle Loubert, Jackie Kain (Shepley Evans, Administrative Support)

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the minutes of 5/07/2020 second by Mr. Katz. Roll-call vote: Mr. Reed, aye; Ms. Yapple, aye; Mr. Hankin, aye; Mr. Clark, aye; Mr. Katz, aye; and Mr. Cooke, aye. Unanimous.

Mr. Cooke proposed a motion to raise the maximum purchase price of houses to \$350,000 in this low interest rate environment for the Down Payment Assistance Program.

Mr. Clark asked why it is an issue?

Ms. Wolfe reminded that one must fit within the guidelines.

Mr. Cooke replied that the Trust's criteria are really income based. He asked: If an applicant can squirrel away the down payment \$, why not?

Mr. Hankin said he was reluctant to see the Trust go beyond the existing median price of home sales.

Mr. Clark said he was not happy at \$350,000, but would prefer to go to \$325,000.

Mr. Hankin asked: Why not use the data point the Trust gets annually?

Mr. Clark asked: Where does one get data.

Ms. Wolfe replied that the Board of Realtors are the best source.

Mr. Cooke suggested that the Trust use the median sale price.

Mr. Hankin asked: Would that be required by Town Meeting?

Mr. Cooke said it would not be required by Town meeting.

Mr. Hankin then suggested that the Trust raise the maximum price to the median purchase price in the MLS System as of January 1st.

Mr. Clark seconded Mr. Cooke's motion with the modification that that the Trust use the Board of Realtors median purchase price number.

Roll call vote: Mr. Reed, Aye; Ms. Yaple, Aye; Mr. Katz, Aye; Mr. Clark, Aye; Mr. Hankin, Aye; Mr. Cooke, Aye. Unanimous

Mr. Cooke asked the Board to turn to the subject of the Alden property feasibility study and offered the floor to June Wolfe.

Ms. Wolfe summarized the feasibility study conclusion saying: "It's feasible with 14 units. There's lots of room for movement in the figures. Very feasible!"

Mr. Hankin said he didn't want the Trust to get locked into 14 units on 7 acres. He felt that the Trust would want to be able to do more than that. He felt strongly that 14 units is too little.

Mr. Clark expressed concern over how tightly the project was structured. He wanted the presentation of the proposed project to be more open and flexible. He reminded the group that the Trust will be putting out a public RFP, and he did not feel comfortable that it might appear that the project was only available to Habitat for Humanity. He did not want other potential developer/builders to feel shut out. He acknowledged that while the Board might feel good with a 14-unit project, others might want to see more units. He also felt that the Trust would want the Town to like the project and be willing to take over the road. On the question of condominium ownership vs. single family residence ownership, he noted that with condos the land is owned in common, whereas with single family homes the homeowner owns the individual residential lot. All agreed.

Ms. Wolfe stated that "affordable" home ownership implies Habitat for Humanity and that there is no other way in Southern Berkshire County to get to "affordable".

Ms. Valli reported that Habitat for Humanity helps new owners set up accounts for future contingencies. She said her research clearly indicates that the neighbors want traditional home ownership and not a super dense residential project.

Mr. Clark noted that build-out is going to take a long time to be accomplished.

Mr. Hankin repeated that he did not want to put a cap on the build-out number of units. He asserted that the project could be 40+ units with a good buffer on 7 acres.

Ms. Valli said that people don't want a cluster of 40 new residences in their neighborhood.

Mr. Hankin said he would not want to see a few abutters running the show. He asserted that the shaping of the project needs to be a public process.

Mr. Clark expressed that he does not believe people in the area want to see 40 units.

Mr. Hankin replied that clustering can generate many more than 40.

Ms. Yaple said she could not imagine more than 20 units in keeping with the wishes of the neighbors.

MINUTES of June 17, 2020

Page 3

Mr. Clark said: "Single family owners own their lot, right?"

Ms. Valli replied that they do.

Mr. Hankin reminded that development of the existing neighborhood predates zoning.

Ms. Wolfe opined that in situations like the present, one must be sensitive to neighborhood wishes. She asserted that 40 units won't be accepted.

Mr. Clark reiterated the conclusion that the feasibility study shows that 14 units work well. He asked whether the target buyers were low, middle or high range income earners?

Ms. Wolfe replied that the people looking for affordable ownership tend to earn 60% to 80% of the median income in Town.

Ms. Valli reminded that many people are paying over 50% of their income for small places.

Mr. Clark asked about the range of monthly costs.

Ms. Wolfe referred to the tables in the feasibility study where the number of bedrooms generally equals the number needed for the family plus one. She quoted that Median Income in 2020 is \$80,000. A 2 Bedroom home at 40% of median income is \$880/month and maximum sale price of \$97,500. A 4 bedroom home at 80% of median income is \$2,108/month and maximum sale price of \$270,000.

Mr. Cooke asked whether things get more affordable if the project expanded to 16 or 18 units.

Ms. Wolfe replied that with 14 units the cost of construction is \$185/sq. ft. which she said was very good. She acknowledged that there were unknowns like "donation fatigue" and other unknowables that are hard to quantify. There are few examples of affordable single-family ownership projects. Most available development financing is for rental projects.

Mr. Cooke asked Ms. Valli whether she was comfortable with 14 units, and she replied she was.

Ms. Wolfe indicated that there are uncertainties that have to be studied and worked out, like an appropriate developer's fee and the right or available mix of volunteer and professional labor. She said that a project of this size is new for Habitat for Humanity and their preliminary budget assumes that volunteer labor will be available.

Ms. Valli acknowledged that COVID19 seriously impacted the availability of Habitat's volunteer labor, but that the neighbors were enthusiastic that there would be opportunities to provide volunteer services and the learning experiences that would be derived.

Mr. Reed reported that the neighbors are very enthusiastic with prospect of Habitat for Humanity's involvement. He reminded that the affordable housing project on the Alden property is not the Trust's only project – ever.

MINUTES of June 17, 2020

Page 4

Mr. Cooke asked that the Board move on to the subject of the Annual Town Meeting, was to be organized in "Drive-In Movie" style in the parking lot at the High School. He suggested that the Board should prepare a fact sheet on the Trust's funding requests through the CPC.

Ms. Yaple noted that the web site would be a good source of information for people.

Mr. Reed advocated that the message should be "short and sweet".

Mr. Katz and Mr. Cooke were concerned about an effort to introduce a motion to "pass" on the vote for CPA funding for the Trust's requests.

Mr. Cooke advocated for a "blast" promoting the Board's requests.

Ms. Valli suggested that the Board might want to get the feasibility message to the neighbors.

Mr. Cooke noted, with regard to his proposed "blast", that because Mr. Hankin does not favor getting locked into 14 units on the Alden property, it might be better to talk about "14 or more" units.

Ms. Wolfe and Ms. Yaple offered to help with the wordsmithing.

Ms. Loubert opined that the Board sounded like they were crafting an advertising message that could be salable, noting the discussion about 14 vs. 40 units.

Mr. Reed asserted that the Board really tried to listen and include the neighborhood, to do the best that the Board could, and that it is important that the Board put its best foot forward.

Mr. Clark added that the Board has wide ranging conversations and holds a variety of opinions.

Mr. Cooke noted that Mr. Hankin wasn't getting traction with his 40 unit suggestion.

Ms. Loubert inquired: 14? 20? 25? How high?

Ms. Valli answered that Habitat for Humanity would only go up to 20 units.

Mr. Cooke noted that for the time being, Habitat for Humanity is the only interested party.

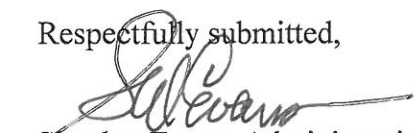
Ms. Loubert concluded that the neighborhood would not like houses one on top of another.

CITIZEN SPEAK: Ms. Loubert said thankyou. Ms. Yaple suggested the Board might want to sit together at Town Meeting. Ms. Valli asked whether Habitat for Humanity would attend, and the answer was "Yes".

NEXT MEETING: To be determined. Mr. Cooke said," we will see how it goes."

ADJOURNMENT: Hearing no objection, Mr. Cooke adjourned the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Shepley Evans, Administrative Support