



CITY OF WATERTOWN

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617 972 6417
Fax: 617 972 6484
www.watertown-ma.gov

Minutes of Watertown Affordable Housing Trust Meeting November 18, 2024 6:30 PM, Remote Participation Only

Attendance

Members present: Cliff Cook, Jill Hyde, David Leon, Leo Patterson Zoe Weinrobe and George Proakis (all remote). Helen Oliver was not present. Non-members present: Larry Field (staff), Alisa Gardner-Todres (present until approximately 7 PM), Toby Reed, Josh Rosmarin, Jacky VanLeeuwen, and Nicole Gardner.

I. Minutes of October 15, 2024 meetings

Minutes of the October 15, 2024 meeting were not ready for review.

II. Willow Park redevelopment

A. Project Eligibility Application

The Watertown Housing Authority and POAH have filed a Project Eligibility Application with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities under Chapter 40B. The process includes a 30-day local comment period. Larry asked the trustees whether they wanted to provide comments and, if so, what they wished to convey. He suggested two areas would be discussion of the Trust's \$400,000 grant and background about the city's affordable housing development efforts.

The Trustees agreed to send a comment letter including the two points Larry outlined. Several trustees offered additional comments, including reference to the project's deep affordability, its addressing the lack of accessibility of the existing public housing units and the opportunity to add a large number of affordable units in one project (versus adding them incrementally through inclusionary zoning). David moved that Cliff and Larry prepare a comment letter as discussed, Zoe seconded the motion, and the motion passed 6-0.

B. Developer's Conference

The City's permitting process includes a pre-application "Developer's Conference" for large projects so that various municipal departments, boards/commissions can comment on the proposed site and building plans. POAH agreed to follow this process and such a conference is scheduled for November 20. Leo will be the Trust's representative. The purpose of this agenda item is for Trustees to share any comments/questions they have with Leo.

David suggested that Leo give attention to universal design and site circulation (especially connections between the buildings and parking) and the potential for the project to provide benefits to the adjoining 103 Nichols project (e.g., improved open space). Zoe noted that the Passive House goal is impressive. Jill suggested questions about screening and noise control for the rooftop mechanical systems. Leo said that he has questions about how the design evolved, stormwater management, parking deck and energy efficiency that he expects will be addressed during the Developer's Conference. Leo asked and confirmed that the trustees were comfortable with the proposed project massing.

III. Accessory Dwelling Units: engagement plan with Watertown Community Conversations

Larry said that he and Cliff have been working with Watertown Community Conversations on an engagement plan on ADUs for winter 2025. In brief, the plan is for the Trust to do outreach in early 2025 for a February meeting that would start with a presentation on ADUs and then breakout groups facilitated by WCC. Feedback will be gathered at the meeting and potentially supplemented by a survey. The process will emphasize discussion rather than counting how many residents are for or against particular things.

Trustees asked questions about the engagement plan, including how feedback will be collected, and agreed that ADUs should be viewed as a way to provide flexibility to homeowners rather than as a means to produce significant amounts of new housing and/or deed-restricted affordable units.

IV. Update: Watertown Square zoning

Larry reported that the Watertown Square zoning amendments were approved on November 14, 2024 with the understanding that the Trust would develop a proposed ADU ordinance (see discussion above) and lead a study of incentives to promote additional and/or deeper affordability in market rate developments. Cliff added that the latter will be complex and require considerable attention from the trustees in 2025.

V. Other Business

None.

VI. Executive Session

Cliff said there was information to discuss in executive session pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(6), particularly to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property where an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body. The trustees voted unanimously to go into executive session and a motion to adjourn the public meeting passed unanimously at approximately 7:29 PM.