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CITY OF WATERTOWN  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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Minutes of Watertown Affordable Housing Trust Meeting  
February 17, 2026 6:00 PM

**Attendance**

Members present: Cliff Cook, David Leon, Jill Hyde, Leo Patterson and Zoe Weinrobe. Members not present: George Proakis and Helen Oliver. Non-members present in person or remotely: Larry Field (staff), Will Downie (staff), Jacky van Leeuwen, Jacob Smith, Adam Schultz, Alisa Gardner-Todreas, Jamie Gordon, Brian Ho, and Matt Kinnemore.

**I. Minutes of January 20, 2026 meeting**

The minutes of the January 20, 2026 meeting were unanimously approved.

**II. Willow Park: support letter for state funding**

Larry said the Willow Park redevelopment project was “invited” into the state’s 2026 funding round for affordable rental developments. He said that it would be helpful for the Trust to send a support letter and noted the draft in the agenda packet. After discussion, Zoe moved, with Jill seconding the motion, that the Trust submit the proposed letter. The motion passed 5-0.

**III. Housing Plan 2026-2030: Housing Needs (Section I)**

Will presented highlights from the draft housing needs section in the agenda packet and asked for comments/proposed changes from the trustees. Points discussed include:

- David noted that it was particularly noteworthy that about 26% of Watertown residents were born outside of the country and asked if this was an increase since the last plan (although staff did not have that information at the meeting, the number five years ago was about 21%). Will said that the percentage of residents with limited ability to speak English has doubled to 5.8% since the last Housing Plan.
- Zoe noted the high percentage of residents 55+ and asked whether there should be more discussion about meeting the housing needs of this aging demographic. She also noted the significant percentage of residents who are below 60% of AMI in household income and, therefore, find it difficult to pay the rent even in inclusionary zoning units. David suggested that many of the lower-income seniors were likely “aging in place” in single family homes; Jill and Cliff said that many are also staying in 2-and 3-family homes. Jill and David agreed that accessibility is not easy to find in these older homes.

- Cliff asked what percentage of cost-burdened households are already in deed-restricted affordable units. Will said this percentage is not readily available because cost-burden percentages come from the Census and are not correlated with occupancy in affordable and market rate units. Trustees agreed that those living in public housing are not cost-burdened because rent is based on household income—while those living in inclusionary zoning units could be because rents are based on area incomes. Larry and Will said that this is an issue with some households in inclusionary zoning units. Even if tenants can reasonably pay the initial rents, the gap between their income and their rents can increase significantly over time. Larry said that after the state lifted its COVID-era freeze on rent increases, many properties have tried to catch up, and the city has urged all properties to limit rent increases for renewing tenants without housing vouchers.

Larry stated that staff will have a consolidated version of the draft plan prepared for the Trust’s review and discussion during the March Trust meeting. The new draft will include all of the sections reviewed by the Trust since last year, as well as a draft introduction and implementation plan.

#### **IV. Other Business**

Larry noted that the agenda packet includes two communications between staff and the trustees. The first forwards an email from MAPC on its thinking, as of January 30, on the affordable housing incentives to be tested and/or considered. The second forwards a public comment about the study. Larry added that staff expect there to be an opportunity in March for the trustees and members of the public to learn about the testing results and comment further on the study.

Larry said that the Residents Advisory Committee was asking each board/commission/committee to provide a volunteer to help prepare a video celebrating the value of serving on such a body. The volunteer would be recorded providing their personal experiences and would not be speaking for the full membership. Zoe agreed to be the Trust’s volunteer.

#### **VI. Executive Session**

No executive session was necessary. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:39 PM.