



CITY OF WATERTOWN

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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Minutes of Watertown Affordable Housing Trust Meeting October 19, 2022 6:18PM, Hybrid Participation

Members in Attendance

Cliff Cook, Jill Hyde, David Leon, Helen Oliver, George Proakis (remote), Zoe Weinrobe.

Non-members present: Larry Field (staff), Alisa Gardner-Todreas, Jacky Dobson (remote), and Michael Lara (remote).

I. Minutes of September 22, 2022 meeting

The minutes of the September 22, 2022 meeting were unanimously accepted as written.

II. Election of officers (may elect officers or defer until later meeting)

Larry reprised the three officer positions (chair, vice-chair, and clerk) and suggested it would be helpful to elect a chair at this meeting even if the other positions remained open longer. Cliff indicated interest in serving as chair. Several trustees said he would be a good choice because of his prior participation in the housing partnership. There was consensus that officers should be elected to a specific term but no clear sense of what term should be adopted. Jill moved that Cliff be elected chair and that officer terms be deferred until a later meeting. David seconded the motion. The motion passed with five yes votes and one abstention (Cliff). From that point, Cliff presided over the meeting.

III. Affordable Housing Trust Goals/Strategies

A. Presentation: Housing Plan 2021-25

Larry provided a presentation on the Housing Plan (2021-25) adopted by the City Council in March 2021. The slides from his presentation are attached to these minutes. During the presentation, there were questions about whether the City's percentage of affordable units on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory included market-rate rental units under the 40B guidelines (no) and about the local preference policy adopted by the housing partnership in 2021 (50% for rental units and to be reviewed with updated data for ownership units).

B. Discussion of Goals/Strategies

There was extended discussion about creating a pipeline of affordable projects that would qualify for federal/state funding. There was consensus that the Trust's work should begin with this strategy and, as noted by Helen, leveraging federal/state resources was key to creating units at any scale. Jill asked if the housing partnership had tried to identify suitable sites. Cliff said that the partnership did not undertake a search.

In recent years, 1 Rosary Drive, the 80 Mt Auburn Street Church, and the now-closed North Branch Library were briefly discussed as potential sites but nothing materialized. Zoe said that identifying specific sites was beyond the capacity of volunteer trustees without help from a consultant and affordable developers. Others agreed.

There was consensus that the three ingredients for creating such a pipeline are suitable sites, local funding match and ability to put together or facilitate an effective development team. George told the trustees that \$250,000 for the Trust in the next is included in the next three city manager budgets and that he thinks the legislature will allow the City to adopt an affordable housing linkage fee. He also noted that Somerville had success in creating affordable units through repositioning older apartment buildings and a scattered-site program.

As members did not appear ready to vote on short-term priorities, Cliff concluded the discussion by suggesting the board continue thinking and offered that priorities could include both affordable development and policy initiatives.

IV. Framing future discussion on Community Preservation Act

Larry said this agenda item was to help prepare for the November meeting that will mainly focus on the relationship between the Trust and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), with participation by its chair (Mark Krackiewicz). Larry noted he distributed the discussion paper drafted by Mark, which was on the CPC's agenda for October 20. There was brief discussion of the funding models identified by Mark, the CPC process, and which affordable housing projects submitted eligibility forms in the 2021 and 2022 rounds.

V. Staff Updates

Larry reported back to the trustees that Metro West Collaborative does not need a Trust representative on its advisory committee. It consists of local advocates and not organizational/municipal representatives.

Cliff asked Larry to summarize the status of MBTA Communities (Chapter 40A/Section 3A) compliance. Larry said the City was working on the Action Plan it must file by January 31, 2023. There was discussion of the "affordability" provisions in the state guidelines and consensus that its ban on required affordability deeper than 80% of area median income is problematic. George added that his budget message proposed work on a plan for Watertown Square; this would necessarily include a conversation about housing in the Square.

VI. New Business

There being no other business, the trustees voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 pm.