



CITY OF WATERTOWN

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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Minutes of Watertown Affordable Housing Trust Meeting November 15, 2022 6:00PM, Hybrid Participation

Members in Attendance

Cliff Cook, Jill Hyde, David Leon, Helen Oliver (remote), Leo Patterson, George Proakis (remote), Zoe Weinrobe. Non-members present: Larry Field (staff), Dennis Duff, Allen Gallagher, Nicole Gardner, Alisa Gardner-Todreas, Mark Krackiewicz, Michael Lara (remote), Anthony Palomba (remote), Elodia Thomas.

I. Minutes of October 19, 2022 meeting

The minutes of the October 19, 2022 meeting were unanimously accepted as written.

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

Larry reprised the two remaining officer positions (vice-chair, and clerk). There was agreement to first address the officer terms, then return to electing officers. Cliff proposed the following language: 'Unless decided otherwise at the time of election, officers shall be elected to serve until their current term as trustee expires. If a trustee remains on the Board after their term as trustee expires, they may continue to serve as an officer during that additional time.' Cliff explained that sometimes renewal is not formally made until after a board/commission member's term has expired. Jill made a motion to adopt the proposed language, Zoe seconded, and it was unanimously passed.

Following discussion about who would be interested in serving in the two positions, two motions were made by David and seconded by Zoe: (1) to elect Jill as Vice-Chair and (2) to elect Helen as clerk. The first motion passed unanimously, and the second motion passed with six yes votes and one abstention (Helen).

Larry said there is an additional role not requiring a vote. The city has a site plan review committee that requires a representative from the Trust. This member would comment on plans for large residential projects before the permitting process begins. Since these projects trigger inclusionary zoning requirements, they will appear before the Trust at a later time. After David expressed interest, it was agreed that he would represent the Trust. Leo expressed interest in attending as a second to learn about the process.

III. Relationship between Community Preservation Committee and Affordable Housing Trust

Mark Krackiewicz, chair of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), made a presentation on the CPC's work to date. Mark said that 14 applications were submitted

in the 2021 round, with two funded, and that there are six applications (seeking \$1.2 million) pending in the 2022 round, with full applications due December 1. The CPC's ending balance in FY22 was \$13.497 million and the projected FY23 revenue is \$3.7 million. He discussed non-allowable categories of spending on affordable housing under the CPA statute: rehabilitation if the property was not acquired or created through CPA funds, maintenance, and preservation (other than protecting the structure). Mark said that a roof leak that threatened significant damage might be viewed differently than an elevator replacement, even though the latter might affect use of some of the units.

There were questions about how the CPC was handling the 10% required to be spent on affordable housing (it is reserved) and whether there is a statutory deadline for spending the housing money (no, it is held until spent on eligible housing uses.)

The trustees then discussed the potential relationship between the two bodies. Cliff noted it was possible but not likely that there will be a new project to fund in the coming year. Mark said if such a project emerges the chairs/staff can talk informally, and the bodies can meet in individual or joint executive sessions to discuss an acquisition. George agreed that while the city was working on establishing a linkage fee, a new project could need a quick decision on a deposit. Cliff said that a request to fund rehab or preservation would benefit from coordination since it might not be a CPA-eligible use. Zoe said it would be important to affordable housing developers to see the two bodies working collaboratively.

Cliff suggested that the trustees not take any action on this agenda item and instead wait to hear the CPC's discussion on November 20.

IV. Continued Discussion of Affordable Housing Trust Goals/Strategies

This item was tabled for lack of time.

V. 103 Nichols Ave: focus on proposed group home/ programming fit with Housing Plan

Michael Lara, Watertown Housing Authority(WHA) Director, made a presentation on the proposed 103 Nichols project seeking CPA funds. Mike said the site has been owned by the WHA for decades, as it was slated for a project before the state ran out of program money in 1982. The state asked the WHA in 2021 to develop the site to produce the housing originally intended. The current proposal is to build a single-family structure with two fully accessible bedrooms on the 1st floor and 3 bedrooms on the 2nd floor. Supportive services would be provided by Beaverbrook-STEP.

The WHA is seeking \$175,000 in CPA money, dedicated for architectural and engineering services. Another source would provide \$50,000 for additional soft costs and environmental due diligence.

Mike's presentation included the following major points:

- The city's Zoning Enforcement Officer determined that a group home with five unrelated adults would be allowable as a "reasonable accommodation." Whether the project would be by right or by special permit would depend on the proposed dimensions.
- Fuss & O'Neil did a Phase 1 environmental report. The Department of Environmental Protection closed the file on this site many years ago. Fuss & O'Neil has recommended a vapor barrier, passive ventilation and slab-on-grade as appropriate measures for a previously contaminated site being reused for housing.
- There is a major need for group homes in this area because of lack of sites in the "inner ring suburbs," and many who qualify for such housing in Watertown and surrounding communities are forced to live far from their families even if homes are available.

Zoe, noting that previously contaminated sites are viable for housing, asked about the site's history (it was a gas station) and whether a long-term use restriction was being considered (Mike wasn't sure). George agreed that previously contaminated sites are common in urban areas and that he has seen 100+ unit developments (including market rate projects) built with vapor barriers. George also asked about other funding sources; Mike said possible sources include the city's American Recovery Act (ARPA) money, HOME-ARP, Trust funding and the WHA reserve.

Leo asked why only 2 of the 5 bedrooms would be accessible; Mike said that the structure would need to be bigger, triggering the need for zoning relief. He also asked about landscaping and Mike said there would be a patio and usable open space. Zoe asked about sustainability and Mike said the hope was to be at or near Net Zero. Councilor Palomba urged the Trust to issue a support letter.

Cliff suggested the Trust support the 103 Nichols application, citing two of the Housing Plan goals (#2, Deeper affordability; #3, Supportive Housing). David noted that the Housing Partnership sent a support letter during the 2021 CPA round for full project funding and this application is for planning funds only. Jill moved that the Trust send a support letter, David seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Discussion of Future Meeting Topics

Zoe suggested site identification as a priority topic and Jill asked if there had been outreach to affordable developers (Larry said yes).

VII. Other Business

There being no other business, the trustees voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm.