

Affordable Housing Trust
July 1, 2021
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference

Roll Call

Present were:

Victoria Petracca, Chair
Frank Streeter, Secretary
Jay Moody
Carolyn Read
Debra Williams

Chair Victoria Petracca called the Affordable Housing Trust's (AHT) meeting to order over Zoom at 7 PM and called the roll of the Trustees.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

After a brief discussion,

Trustee Read moved to accept the minutes of the Trust's April 8, May 12, May 13, May 20, & June 3, 2021 meetings; Trustee Moody seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

Monitoring of Lancaster's Existing Affordable Housing Inventory

Trustee Read updated the Board on the status of 32 Carter St. The relevant documents have been prepared for the SB's sign off and are in the Town's Administrator's office.

Chair Petracca briefed the Board on the Harbor Homes project now being built at 2038 Lunenburg Road. It consists of 23 homes and an office building, with 2 of the homes being deed-restricted affordable units. Chair Petracca is coordinating with DHCD so the status of the units can be tracked going forward.

Chair Petracca noted that the former Jones Crossing site is now under P&S with Mark O'Hagan, who will be presenting his new plans to the Board at its July 15 meeting.

Scheduled Appearances

Karen Chapman of MRPC

Chair Petracca noted that the AHT would no longer be having joint meetings with the EDC about the Capital Group's project in North Lancaster. While the joint meetings had been helpful, the two committees' work on the project is diverging, with the EDC working on the industrial parts of the project and AHT working on the housing component. Chair Petracca encouraged the Trustees to continue to attend EDC meetings if they wished.

Confirm Parcels in 40R District Map

The Board reviewed the map of possible parcels to be included in the 40R zone with Ms. Chapman and discussed who owns which parcels and which ones should be proposed for inclusion in the new 40R zone. Any parcels in the 40R zone that have been developed already are grandfathered to the extent of their existing construction, but any further work after the adoption of 40R zoning must comply with the new 40R requirements. This includes the lots with the existing Dunkin Donuts and the Mobil gas station.

Secretary Streeter asked the members of Capital Group who were in attendance how adding a 40R overlay district would affect the value of the existing lots, and they responded that they did not believe there would be any negative effects. Chair Petracca suggested the 40R overlay be extended to all of the lots marked in green on the map in the materials for the meeting on the AHT section of the Town website. After a brief discussion,

Secretary Streeter moved to define the new 40R district as all the lots outlined in green on the map; Trustee Read seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

After a further discussion clarifying the boundaries of the proposed district,

Secretary Streeter moved to remove lot 8.45 from the 40R district; Trustee Moody seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

Review Recommendations for 40R Application

The Board discussed design standards for the 40R zone. Chair Petracca noted that these design standards are not required for a 40R zone, but are recommended. Ms. Chapman proposed the design standards be included in the 40R zoning overlay regulations and not as a separate document, and approach the Board agreed with. Chair Petracca asked if the standards could be based on Lancaster's existing IPOD zoning bylaw but Ms. Chapman stated they need to be based on the Commonwealth's existing 40R template, which Lancaster can modify to meet each zone's particular needs.

Chair Petracca then reviewed the process for successfully adopting 40R zoning and the series of votes that will be needed. Chair Petracca asked if the restrictions in Capital Group's water agreement with Leominster should be included in the 40R standards, but Secretary Streeter suggested that they not be to allow for flexibility. Chair Petracca asked about open space requirements for the 40R zone, which the Board supports. Secretary Streeter suggested defining open space for this purpose not as traditional woods and fields, but tree cover, landscaping, open spaces between buildings and the like as a way to accurately convey expectations for what is anticipated to be a fully developed site.

The Board then reviewed various design standards presently in Lancaster's IPOD bylaw as pointed out by Ms. Chapman. The Board discussed possible height and massing of buildings in the zone, needed parking, and how to correctly specify these requirements.

Member Largey (who was absent) sent an email with questions for Capital Group. These included a request for a number of electric charging stations to be required in the parking areas. Capital Group stated that it would not be possible to have parking under the buildings, but that it would be possible to build separate garages as was done at Capital Group's project in Maynard. The Board felt that the 40R specifications should refer to Lancaster's existing lighting and sign bylaws. Chair Petracca stated that play spaces for children should be mandated and Secretary Streeter stated the same about dog parks.

In reference to the Commonwealth's zoning requirements for towns on the MBTA network, Ms. Chapman said that MART is willing to provide bus service to the project, including a formal bus stop, which formally qualifies as MBTA service. Member Largey submitted an email asking about requirements for rainwater reuse, open space, and for a solar microgrid on site. The Board will discuss all these at its next meeting.

Chair Petracca introduced the topic of affordability levels. Low income housing has a qualification level of 80% or less of local AMI, while very low income housing requires an AGI of 60% or less of local AMI. Moderate income housing is classified as being 80-120% of AMI, and while needed in Lancaster, does not qualify as low income for the requirements of a 40R zone.

Chair Petracca noted that the entire project cannot be restricted to over 55 housing or for units for the disabled or for assisted living. However some part of the units could be subject to one or more of these restrictions. Ms. Chapman will research the requirements.

A 40R district needs a Plan Approval Authority, which could be the Planning Board, the ZBA, or a custom group. Ms. Chapman recommended choosing the Planning Board, and after some discussion the Board agreed to continue the discussion at its July 15 meeting. Trustee Read stated that the specified monitoring agent should be described as "AHT or its designee" to give some flexibility. Ms. Chapman will try to have the revised version ready for the Board for its meeting on August 5.

Capital Group presentation

As the landowner and developer, Capital Group presented some slides of conceptual plans for proposed housing and retail options for their new development proposed for the new 40R zone.

Slide 1 showed massing and diversity of facades.

Slide 2 showed residential facades and a proposed building height of 45', which is above what Lancaster's current zoning permits in any zone.

Slide 3 showed two different perspectives of the proposed development. In these slides the level of the slab for the buildings would be 12' below the level of Lunenburg Road. Members of the Board noted that at 45' tall, even with a slab height 12' below the roadway the buildings would still look very large.

Slide 4 showed an overall view of the project from Lunenburg Road. Capital Group noted that the existing power poles along Lunenburg Road are 40' tall, such that their tops would be higher than the tops of the buildings as proposed due to the land dropping down

away from the road. Members of the Board still felt the buildings would be large and visually unappealing. Capital Group advocated for 4 story buildings (i.e. 45' tall) instead of 3 stories, which they feel would create a sense of "sprawl" on the site. Slide 5 showed a selection of sample building materials

Public Comment

Lancaster resident Rob Zidek asked Capital Group about traffic safety provisions, especially concerning pedestrians crossing Lunenburg Road towards Kimball's. He asked for a peer review of Capital Group's traffic studies on this topic. Phil Eugene, Chair of the EDC agreed and stated that the EDC will be approaching the Select Board about this. Chair Petracca noted that DOT requires a peer review of these traffic studies, especially in relation to mitigation of risk from any new construction. Capital Group also pointed out that MEPA would also have to review and approve the traffic studies.

New Business

Chair Petracca announced that newly elected Select Board member Alix Turner has been designated the SB's liaison to the DCAMM project.

Communications

Chair Petracca was pleased to report that the inclusionary zoning article had passed at the Annual Town Meeting in June. She also reviewed the Trust's upcoming meetings, as well as some other related presentations and the EDC's schedule.

Adjournment

There being no further business to consider,

Trustee Moody moved to adjourn the AHT meeting; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

The AHT adjourned at 9:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary