

Affordable Housing Trust
July 15, 2021
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference

Roll Call

Present were:

Victoria Petracca, Chair
Frank Streeter, Secretary
Jay Moody
Carolyn Read
Debra Williams
Marilyn Largey, ex officio

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

None

Monitoring of Lancaster's Existing Affordable Housing Inventory

Trustee Read updated the Board on the status of 32 Carter St. The Local Action Unit application and Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan have both been submitted to DHCD. Once DHCD approves the marketing plan the unit will be submitted for final approval and once approved will be added to Lancaster's Affordable Housing Inventory.

Chair Petracca briefed the Board on the Harbor Homes project now being built at 2038 Lunenburg Road that will have 23 homes, with 2 of the homes being deed-restricted affordable units. This project also needs a Local Action Unit application and Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan as above. AHT strongly recommends the developer hire a consultant for this task and not try to write it themselves. AHT is willing to review all materials for compliance.

Scheduled Appearances

Mark O'Hagan of MCO Associates, who is buying the former Jones Crossing project.

Mr. O'Hagan stated that he has the property under agreement and is working to satisfy some contingencies before he signs a P&S. He presented a PowerPoint presentation of his plans for the project. He proposes to construct 32 rental units as stand alone cottages of 2-3 bedrooms each, all deed restricted to under 80% of AMI so they can all be added to Lancaster's AHI. He stated that under state law at least 10% of the units constructed are required to be three bedroom units to accommodate families.

Mr. O'Hagan is planning to build a "community concept" development and asked for the Board's comments and questions. He hopes to get the support of the Board before he presents his plan to the ZBA for approval. Trustee Moody encouraged the construction of one-storey houses as in keeping with Lancaster. Mr. O'Hagan noted that as a rental

project it would have only a single owner and so would not have many of the operational issues associated with a traditional homeowners association. MCO is building projects in Bolton and Harvard with slightly larger units. This project will not have any garages as the site is too small such that the cost would be prohibitive. Finance Committee member Dick Trussell asked if there would be a preference for Lancaster residents, which Mr. O'Hagan answered in the affirmative.

Continued discussion of 40R zoning in North Lancaster

The Board reviewed AMI standards for the proposed 40R district in North Lancaster. The default for affordable is 80% of AMI, but Trustee Largey advocated for more units at 60% AGI or less as that is where she sees the need for housing. Trustee Read wanted to see a minimum of one unit at less than a 50% AMI for each 25 at 80%.

Capital Group's current housing proposal is for 152 units of rental housing, of which 25% (38 units) will be deed restricted affordable units. By having at least 25% of the units designated as affordable all of the units will qualify towards Lancaster's goal of having 10% of its housing stock as affordable units. Secretary Streeter suggested that 10% of the affordable units be restricted to 50% AMI or below, which would be 4 units. Given that this will be a rental property, lower AMI numbers mean less rent revenue so there may be some pushback in the future from Capital Group about these percentages. Finance Committee Member Dick Trussell asked some questions about what the actual rents might be in dollars and cents.

Secretary Streeter asked Trustee Largey about her recommendations for AMIs. After discussion it was the sense of the Board that lower AMIs are preferable and that having half of the units at a 50% AMI would be preferable to higher AMIs. Secretary Streeter advocated for asking for a higher number.

The Board discussed permitted uses for the 40R zone and there was wide agreement that industrial uses should be prohibited. The Board felt both single family and multi-family housing should be permitted. There was discussion about various commercial uses but no decision was reached. Chair Petracca will provide some formal usage definitions for the Board to review.

The Board then discussed who the permit granting authority for the 40R zone should be, and if it should be the Planning Board, (PB) the Zoning Board of Appeals, (ZBA) or a custom/hybrid group. Phil Eugene of the EDC said he favored a hybrid group. After further discussion,

Trustee Read moved that the Planning Board be the permit granting authority; Secretary Streeter seconded the motion, but after discussion the motion failed on a 2-3 vote.

Subsequently,

Trustee Moody moved that a separate committee be the permit granting authority; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 3-2 vote.

The Board then discussed the membership of the Committee, and

Trustee Moody moved that the permit granting authority be a Committee comprised of one member each from the Planning Board, the ZBA, the Conservation Commission, the Affordable Housing Trust, and the Economic Development Committee, each to be appointed by their own Board; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

The member appointed by the ZBA may not participate in any appeal of the permit to the ZBA.

The Board agreed that a site plan review will be needed for all uses in a 40R district.

The discussion about MBTA communities was postponed to a future meeting.

Public Comment

None

New Business

None

Communications

The next two scheduled Affordable Housing Trust Meetings will be held on Thursday, August 5, 2021 at 7 P.M. via Zoom, and on Thursday, August 19, 2021 at 7 P.M. via Zoom.

Adjournment

There being no further business to consider,

Secretary Streeter moved to adjourn the meeting; Trustee Read seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary