

Affordable Housing Trust
June 1, 2023
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference



Roll Call

Present were:

Victoria Petracca, Chair
Frank Streeter, Secretary
Jason Allison
Carolyn Read
Debra Williams
Kelly Dolan, ex officio

Chair Petracca called the Affordable Housing Trust's (AHT) meeting to order over Zoom at 7:06 PM and called the roll of the Trustees. Chair Petracca reminded the Board that each member is required to complete the Commonwealth's updated conflict of interest training, which is available online. She also reminded the newly appointed Trustees to get sworn in before the July meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

After reviewing the minutes from the Trust's April 6, 2023 meeting and revising some minor typos,

Trustee Read moved to accept the minutes; Secretary Streeter seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 4-0 vote as Trustee Allison arrived late.

Scheduled Appearances

None

Updates to Lancaster's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) [part 1]

Chair Petracca noted that the affordable unit is still for sale at the Blue Heron development. It is restricted to below 80% AGI and Blue Heron also has an over 55 age restriction. Chair Petracca noted that eligible households interested in applying for the affordable unit at Blue Heron should contact the Monitoring Agent, CHAPA, or the Trust for contact info.

40B project at 13 Neck Road

The Board then discussed the proposed 11-unit 40B project to be located at 13 Neck Rd. Trustee Dolan and Chair Petracca briefed the Board about the results of the site visit on May 18. Chair Petracca said that the site walk was well conducted and lasted about 35 minutes. Attendees included four members of the development team, a senior manager from Mass Housing, Lancaster Town administrator Kate Hodges, and local residents. Chair Petracca noted that the developer had made positive design changes in response to their presentation and interactions at a previous AHT meeting. The Board discussed residents' feedback about the property. Chair Petracca gave a detailed explanation on the various factors that could allow require changes to a 40B project versus factors that may

irritate the neighbors but are not dispositive as far as Mass Housing is concerned. Some of the officially valid issues include the lack of sewer capacity, public safety considerations, and parking. The Board also discussed issues relating to the historical nature of the site.

The Board then discussed its official response to the State. When crafting its response the members of the Board were very clear that it needs to begin with the Trust's commitment to affordable housing in Lancaster, and noting that Lancaster's affordable housing is still under 5% of the total housing stock. Chair Petracca commented on the positives in the design and how it was integrated into the neighborhood.

Trustee Allison objected to what he described as minimal setbacks, as well as issues with inadequate sewer capacity and inadequate parking. He noted that he was opposed to the project as currently presented. Trustee Williams expressed some questions about the density of the project and commented on residents' many concerns about that issue. Chair Petracca then continued a very thorough presentation on the 40B process, including the workings of the Housing Appeals Court relating to objections to 40B projects. She noticed that developers win these appeals about 90% of the time. Additionally a 40B development must be economically viable and Chair Petracca explained how the calculation of profit margins might work. Secretary Streeter discussed how to format the letter based on the above issues.

Chair Petracca would like to add a review of the existing pipeline for reference. Lancaster resident Kendra Dickinson of 402 Oetman Way noted the developer's work on landscaping of the project and additional work the developer is trying to do for mitigation. She pointed out that the town desperately needs more rentals although she would prefer a lower density project, especially given the potential traffic impact.

Trustee Allison asked if the Board would have a yay or nay vote versus general comments. Secretary Streeter outlined the various comments and noted the areas of concerns expressed by the Board. Chair Petracca stated that this letter does not serve as a definitive positive or negative opinion, just the Trust's comments on the aspects of the project which Trust thinks needs to be improved. Chair Petracca explained how the Trust's letter fits into the regulatory process. This process is the first step, and if the project is approved by the State that will result in a project eligibility letter, which will include the various concerns raised in this process.

Lancaster resident Sam Malatos, 24 Neck Rd., who lives across the street from the project, stated that he was opposed to the project as currently proposed. His major concern was lack of sewer capacity, which he feels needs to be addressed at the very start of the project and not later on once the project has proceeded somewhat. He also expressed his feeling that the proposed parking for the project is inadequate and the road fronting the project is already narrow and has poor visibility. He also expressed some concerns about the site being in the ACEC, as is much of the center of Town.

Lancaster resident Jennifer Pullen of 43 Neck Rd., expressed her concerns about the grading of the lot and drainage from it. She is also concerned about low water pressure in the area. After a further discussion,

Secretary Streeter moved that given the upcoming deadline Chair Petracca be authorized to write the letter based on the above discussion; Trustee Read seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

Updates to Lancaster's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) [part 2]

Chair Petracca updated the Board about the 213-219 Main Street project and the developer's change of the affordable unit from a one-bedroom to a two-bedroom unit based on the Board's discussion and concerns expressed at its May meeting. The Board is still concerned that the units are too small and thus not compliant with the size requirements specified in the Commonwealth's current Regulatory Agreement that is to be recorded with each affordable unit. Chair Petracca will update DHCD and Maureen O'Hagan, who is serving as the affordable housing agent for the property.

Cottage Lane, which is the former Jones Crossing development now being completed by MCO, has received all of its permits and construction of its 32 rental cottages is underway.

Housing Production Plan

Chair Petracca discussed Lancaster's Housing Production Plan and the schedule for its update. Planning Director Jasmin Farinacci has applied for a MA One Stop grant to cover all the costs of the update. Secretary Streeter stressed the urgent nature of the process. Chair Petracca will work with Lancaster Town Administrator Kate Hodges to move the process along.

Public Comment

none

New Business

Chair Petracca noted DHCD's name change and Secretary Streeter noted that the Commonwealth again having a Housing Secretary was an improvement.

Communications

None

The next regularly scheduled Affordable Housing Trust Meeting will be on Thursday, July 6, 2023 at 7 P.M. via Zoom.

Adjournment

There being no further business to consider,

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary