

Affordable Housing Trust
March 7, 2024
Meeting held via Zoom videoconference



Roll Call

Present were:

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

Brian Keating, Director of Community Development and Planning
Ralph Gifford, Lancaster Sewer Commission

Chair Petracca called the Affordable Housing Trust's meeting to order over Zoom at 7:02 PM and called the roll of the Trustees.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

None

Scheduled Appearances

None

Housing Production Plan

Chair Petracca reviewed the Town's need for an updated and approved Housing Production Plan (HPP) as the current plan is expiring. The Trust selected Community Scale as the winning vendor and Chris Petracca introduced the notice of award and a proposed contract for their work. Lancaster Planning Director Brian Keating came up with the contract by taking a previous one and modifying it. Chair Petracca reviewed the notice of award and asked for comments. After a brief discussion,

Secretary Streeter moved to accept the text of the notice of award; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

Director Keating reviewed the terms of the contract. Schedule A is the actual proposal. Director Keating and Chair Petracca reviewed the dates for the deliverables and for a final presentation to the Trust, as well as a presentation to the Planning Board and Select Board. Chair Petracca will try to schedule this presentation for the Select Board's meeting on September 16. Both the Planning Board and the Select Board must approve the HPP before it is submitted for state approval. Chair Petracca asked how to include HPP data in the Town's updated Master Plan given that the revised Master Plan is due to be completed by late June. After a brief discussion,

Secretary Streeter moved to accept the contract with the discussed changes to dates; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

Annual Report

The Board reviewed Trustee Allison's summary of the Trust's activities throughout the past year. He created it usually using an artificial intelligence tool and it was quite effective. However, the Board will still use Chair Petracca's narrative form draft, but with possible additions from the documents that Trustee Allison provided. After a brief discussion,

Secretary Streeter moved to accept Chair Petracca's draft report with any additions; Trustee Williams seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

Updates to Lancaster's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

North Lancaster 40R

Capital Group/702 LLC's project in North Lancaster, represented by Bohler Engineering, has had some delays in its filings with MEPA, so responses have been pushed back to May. At present, 702 has applications in front of both the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission, both of which are out for peer review. The Town is still waiting to receive funds to commission the peer review for the project's Notice of Intent. (NOI) The Planning Board has received a peer review response from Haley & Ward, the engineers representing the town, and are waiting for Bohler's response to those comments.

Neck Farm Estates 40B

The Neck Road Estates 40B project located at 13 Neck Rd. has been delayed due to sewer connection issues. Ralph Gifford of the Lancaster Sewer Commission reported that no sewage credits are presently available, and they will only become available if infiltration into the Town's existing sewer system can be reduced. There is a study starting now with an estimated November completion to review the infiltration issue and recommend solutions, so it is possible that more credits will be available in 2025 to allow the project to proceed. Director Keating reported that the traffic study will be ready by the end of the month for the ZBA meeting and Secretary Streeter reported that the Planning Board will be reviewing the stormwater plans for the project at an upcoming meeting.

Harbor Homes/2038 Lunenburg Rd.

The Laurel Hill development at 2038 Lunenburg Rd. is a project that was permitted under the IPOD regulations and consists of 23 homes and a commercial building. This project was commenced prior to the Town's adoption of its inclusionary zoning regulations, so only two affordable units are required, not the three units that would be required under inclusionary zoning. These affordable units are to be owner occupied, not rentals, so only the two affordable units will be added to the Town's SHI.

Chair Petracca discussed the developer's request to have Habitat for Humanity build the two affordable units, and expressed a number of concerns about that plan. She noted that legally the units need to be identical to the other units in the development, and that will be very difficult to achieve unless the same builder constructs all of them. Secretary Streeter suggested that this was a matter for the Planning Board to consider as they must vote on the proposal. He suggested that Chair Petracca and other Trustees come to the Planning Board meeting when the project is in front of it and make those specific points.

Chair Petracca asked that the Trust adopt a formal position on this issue. Trustees Allison and Dolan agreed that the Trust should do that. Secretary Streeter agreed that the planning board would welcome a formal response from the Trust, but he must recuse himself from the discussion due to a potential conflict from his position as Chair of the Planning Board. Trustee Read must also recuse herself from this topic as she is employed as the Regional Director for Habitat for Humanity. Chair Petracca will circulate relevant documents and a draft letter with comments to the Planning Board to the Board for review and will ask Harbor Homes for a formal proposal and response to discuss at an upcoming meeting.

197 Main St. (previously 213-219 South Main St.)

Chair Petracca reported that the mandated housing lottery is underway for the one affordable unit at the 197 Main St. project. She was also pleased to report that a lottery is also underway for the 32 units at Cottage Lane.

DCAMM

There is nothing about the DCAMM site that is going to be on the Warrant for the Town's upcoming Annual Meeting in May. Trustee Williams spoke to Lancaster Town Administrator Kate Hodges who reported that the project is presently stalled in the Legislature. The enabling legislation has made it through the first reading, but progress has been slow. Chair Petracca stressed the need for the Trustees to continue to advocate for deeply affordable units in the development. Deeply affordable means no more than 30% of AMI, as contrasted to the usual 80% AMI units. The Board discussed the possible schedule for the redevelopment of the DCAMM property and related issues.

Communications

None

Public Comment

Deb D'Eramo of Harvard Road thanked the Affordable Housing Trust for its work on affordable housing, and for having a public comment period at its meetings. She advocated that the Town set up a special committee just to work on the DCAMM project. She also expressed her concerns about the lack of a playground at the 13 Neck Rd. 40B project and feels the project should be surrounded by a fence. Trustee Allison noted that he would put an agenda item about public comment on an upcoming Select Board agenda.

Ralph Gifford of 851 George Hill Road seconded Ms. D'Eramo comments. He noted the difficulties of building affordable housing, especially in South Lancaster, which would be a desirable place as housing units could be built within walking distance of services. He expressed his personal concerns about aspects of the 40B project at 13 Neck Rd., but definitely understands the need for more affordable housing in Lancaster and wants to see it built.

New Business

Trustee Dolan discussed the possibility of having a roundtable discussion at the Community Center about affordable housing. She wants to develop a primer for citizens about affordable housing, what it is, how it works, how to get it, and how long a wait may be involved. Trustee Dolan will email the board for ideas. She will coordinate this effort and try to have up to five topics with one per meeting. She would like to do this in the spring and again in November. Trustee Dolan and the Board reviewed some potential topics and Chair Petracca pledged the Trust's support.

Chair Petracca mentioned the ongoing survey for the Town's updated Master Plan and encouraged everyone to fill it out. Director Keating told the Board where the paper surveys are but promoted use of the QR code so the survey could be filled out online.

Chair Petracca reminded the Board of the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative to be held on March 16.

The next regularly scheduled meetings of the Affordable Housing Trust will be held on Thursday, April 4, 2024 and on Thursday, May 2, 2024, both at 7 P.M. via Zoom.

Adjournment

There being no further business to consider,

Secretary Streeter moved to adjourn the meeting; Trustee Allison seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank S. Streeter, Secretary