

September 1, 2021
4 Highfield Drive
Lancaster, MA 01523

Town of Lancaster Finance Committee
701 Main Street, Suite 3
Lancaster, MA 01523

RE: Request to Transfer \$8000 to Planning Board Revolving Account

At the Planning Board's August 23rd Meeting, it was suggested that I write a memo to your committee in advance of your next meeting. This is a request that you transfer \$8000 to the Planning Board Revolving Account, to replace \$8000 that was removed without authorization when a single invoice was paid twice in late 2020.

In 2020 the Planning Board contracted with Barrett Planning Group LLC to complete a study. We received one invoice for \$8000 ("Invoice 470") dated 10/28/2020. We approved a payment voucher for that invoice at our 11/23/2020 meeting after reviewing the first draft of the study.

Unfortunately, in error, the invoice was paid twice: once with Batch 18E in October or November before we authorized it, and again in December with Batch 179 after we approved the voucher. As fate would have it this double payment totaling \$16000 was exactly the total value of our contract with Barrett Planning Group LLC. Upon receipt of the second payment the contractor quietly ceased work on the study and considered the project delivered and paid in full. In actuality, the study was very much a first draft: the first data table cited reference affordable housing prices for the wrong district. That incorrect data cascaded into the following tables. Furthermore, most of the proforma analysis in the report were miscalculated due to arithmetic errors. The analysis in the report used calculations that, upon confirmation with a calculator, changed dramatically.

The double payment was not immediately discovered. In February the contractor responded to requests for updates with a message that she would not work further on the study. Debra Dennis in the planning office helped me to obtain the transaction report, invoices and warrants: we identified the double payment in early March and shared the information with the Town Administrator, Planning Board and Selectmen.

We initially worked with the Town Administrator to try to negotiate with the contractor, but he was unsuccessful, and no progress was made. Our contract with Barrett Planning group had called for "monthly" invoices as the study progressed, and it gave us the option to terminate the contract if progress was

unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, no options remained to us once the contract was paid in full by the double-payment.

Apparently at the August 16th Select Board meeting this transfer to the Planning Board Revolving Account was suggested as a solution by the Town Administrator. (I can't confirm this, as apparently the video of that meeting was lost.) As suggested, here is a request to make the Planning Board Revolving Account whole with a transfer of \$8000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell W. Williston". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered on the page.

Russell W. Williston

Chair, Lancaster Planning Board

Enc:

Copy of the Planning Board's contract with Barrett Planning

Report of Transactions against the Planning Board's "Revolving Fund"

Invoices and Warrants for Payment Batches 179 and 18E