

Cohasset Affordable Housing Trust

Date: Wednesday, January 18, 2023

Time: 8:45AM

Place: Via Zoom

Total Members Present:

Steve Gaumer, Chair
Cindy Matheison
Rob Henry
Diane Kennedy
David Fifer
Tom Meade

Absent:

Ted Carr

Others Present:

Lauren Lind, Planning Director
Cindy Amara, AHT Legal Counsel

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Gaumer at 8:45AM. Roll Call Vote: Cindy Matheison - Present, Rob Henry – Present; Diane Kennedy - Present, David Fifer - Present, Tom Meade – Present and Chair Steve Gaumer - Present.

Public Comment

There was none.

Discussion on Special Counsel Transition

Chair Gaumer reported that he has a meeting next Thursday with Attorney Karis North, the suggested replacement of Attorney Amarra, who has now taken on the position of City Solicitor for the City of Somerville. He will determine the level of commitment and dedication that Attorney North can make to the Trust as there are areas of the Trust doing business that require solid and informed leadership by special counsel. Discussion ensued on the expertise of the firm Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehane in the area of municipal government and its reasonable billing policy. Both Member Kennedy and Ms. Lind spoke highly of Attorney North as having had direct experience with her as counsel.

Depending on the results of Chair Gaumer’s initial conversation with Attorney North, he will schedule a meeting with her at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Trust, at the conclusion of which a vote will be taken to hire Attorney North or consider other options. The Trust has independence from the Town in its decision to hire special counsel.

Discussion of FY23 goals and updates

Project pipeline – Tom Meade

Member Meade asked Ms. Lind to provide an update on the projects in the pipeline. Fundraising is underway for 808 Jerusalem Rd. Habitat for Humanity project with construction estimated for spring/summer 2023. 390 Chief Justice Cushing Highway is under construction but nearing certificate of occupancy and 1 Pleasant St. is under construction and will likely be for a few more months. 147 Main

St. is under active construction. 55 South Main St. is currently under Planning Board review for mixed use. Of the twelve residential units planned, The Town will receive one or two units based on 10% inclusionary zoning.

Chair Gaumer reported that the purchase and sale agreement had been signed on Elm St. He expressed his frustration and embarrassment that the initial deposit check of \$1 thousand has not yet been issued by the Town. He and members also expressed their concern that as a result of the significant delay in the deposit of the check, the transaction may be in jeopardy. Additional documentation has been requested including the meeting minutes of the vote to go ahead with the transaction, but executive session minutes containing the vote are not posted until ninety days after the meeting. He has contacted the Town Manager who has assured him that the check will be deposited today.

Ms. Lind added that Attorney McNulty has forwarded an additional document to be executed by the Trust, the draft of which she will circulate to members today. She stated that Attorney McNulty has spoken with seller counsel, who is understanding of the situation and the transaction is scheduled to close by the end of the month. Chair Gaumer expressed his appreciation for Ms. Lind's efforts and offered to continue to bring pressure to bear, if necessary, for a timely resolution on the financial end.

Communication plan – Cindy Matheison and Ted Carr

Member Matheison reported that the additional content she presented at the last meeting has been posted to the website. This content may also be used for the upcoming CPC hearing. Chair Gaumer noted that the Trust is on the agenda for the CPC meeting on January 23rd.

Chair Gaumer noted that in compliance with MA general laws, the CPC needs to put a grant agreement in place to confirm funding provided to the Trust, i.e. \$250 thousand appropriated by Town Meeting vote and an additional \$250 thousand granted upon application. The latter will be used for the purchase and renovation of Elm St., and in the near term funds for Jerusalem Rd. The Trust agreed to provide legal services to pay for the draft agreement, but Attorney Amarra was not able to accomplish this task before she left, and should be addressed by the new counsel as soon as possible.

Member Matheison stated the CPC hearing would present a good opportunity for the Trust to present its accomplishments in a public forum, and to alleviate any concerns that the CPC may have about the allocation and dedication of funds.

Member Matheison confirmed with Mr. Fifer that he is willing to assist the Trust in promulgating the mission of the Trust across social media and other platforms. Discussion ensued on the importance of timely posting of minutes to the website. Chair Gaumer will follow with Member Carr on his efforts to secure outside transcription vendors. Ms. Lind reported that she had reached to the Human Resources Director who had drafted an initial job description for the position. She will follow with her on next steps for advertising the position.

Finance plan – Steve Gaumer, Chair

Chair Gaumer stated that the current financial picture includes the pledged liabilities in the amount of \$75 thousand for 808 Jerusalem Rd., South Main St. in the amount of \$15 thousand, as well as the purchase amount for Elm St., the contingent liability of which will include the renovation cost. To be discussed further is a longer term view expressed by the Steering Committee. The Trust presently has one owner owned and occupied property on the SHI list, and should the Trust be considering other similar properties. The direction the Trust is taking will be driven by financial capabilities, and the Steering Committee is looking for guidance from the Trust as to its overall strategic plan.

Affordable Housing Steering Committee update

808 Jerusalem Rd. Habitat for Humanity Fundraising:

In Mr. Pierce’s unexpected absence, Ms. Lind reported that the Steering Committee had met last week to discuss the pyramid approach to fundraising efforts by the Habitat for Humanity. A gala event will be held in May at the Red Lion. Substantial donations will be sought prior to the event coupled with in-kind donations for work from electrical unions and local businesses. The goal is to secure 75% of the goal of \$500 thousand for two units before breaking ground. Additional donations beyond the \$75 thousand is welcomed from the Trust, and the newly hired fundraiser is seeking to build her network. Member Meade volunteered to meet with the fundraiser. Mr. Pierce will be scheduled to bring the Trust up to date at its next meeting.

Member Comments

Member Meade began the discussion on securing transcription services for recorded meetings. Ms. Lind will follow up with the Human Resources Director on the process for securing contracted services. While executive sessions are not recorded, minutes will be continue to be taken by Member Matheison, but it was the consensus of the Trust that timely posting of open session minutes is critical to the Trust’s commitment to transparency.

Member Henry began the discussion on upcoming expiration of member appointments. Discussion ensued on the process of appointment by the Select Board for staggering terms. Select Board Representative Kennedy will research the topic and report back to the Trust.

Member Henry also began the discussion on the continuation of Zoom meetings or returning to in-person meetings. While in-person meetings may be the desirable format, it was agreed that having the technology to conduct hybrid meetings for occasion member remote attendance and the recording of minutes was critical before returning to in-person meetings. The Chair agreed this would be determined before a vote was taken to return to in-person meetings.

Administrative

Next meeting: February 8, 2023

Approval of Minutes

There were none.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Adjourn to Executive Session

To enter into Executive Session under MGL .30A, Section 21 for permissible reason #6: to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the Chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Chair Gaumer announced that Executive Session was not needed at this time.

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Member Meade and seconded by Member Henry, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Roll call vote:

Member Fifer-aye

Select Board Representative Kennedy-aye

Member Matheison-aye

Member Henry-aye

Member Meade-aye

Chair Gaumer-aye

The meeting adjourned at 9:13AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford
Recording Secretary