

Cohasset Affordable Housing Trust

Date: Wednesday, February 8, 2023

Time: 8:45AM

Place: Via Zoom

Total Members Present:

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

Absent:

Tom Meade and Ted Carr

Others Present:

Lauren Lind, Planning Director
Cassandra Thayer, Assistant Town Planner
Karis North, Candidate for Special Counsel

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

Resignation of Town Planner Lauren Lind

Chair Gaumer announced that Lauren Lind is resigning her position with the Town of Cohasset to go into private practice. He recognized Ms. Lind’s years of service to the Trust, and members joined with him in expressing their appreciation. She expressed her gratification in serving the Trust, and introduced Assistant Town Planner Cassandra Thayer, who would be taking over managing the Trust.

Public Comment

There was none.

Discussion on Special Counsel Transition

Chair Gaumer introduced Attorney Karis North as the recommended replacement for counsel for Attorney Amara. Attorney North stated that she is attorney with the firm Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane and her seven years of practice area have been in municipal law and an expert in 40B housing. She is currently town counsel to the cities of Natick and Mendon. She has recently acted as special counsel to the Town of Cohasset in the area of land use and worked in permitting process for the redevelopment of Cohasset Harbor. She is a member of various professional associations.

Following discussion, and upon motion duly made by Member Henry and seconded by Member Fifer, it was unanimously voted to appoint Attorney Karis North as counsel to the AHT. Roll Call Vote: Cindy Matheison-aye, Rob Henry-aye, David Fifer-aye, Diane Kennedy-aye and Chair Steve Gaumer-aye.

Motion passes 5-0, unanimous.

Affordable Housing Steering Committee update

Paul Kierce, Chair of the Affordable Housing Steering Committee, reported that he is working with the Habitat for Humanity on its estimated six to ten-month fundraising efforts for the 808 Jerusalem Rd.

project. The three-pronged approach consists of seeking donations from corporate sponsors, in-kind donations from local businesses for labor and materials and general community involvement. The annual fundraiser gala is scheduled for May 11th at the Red Lion. While this event is intended for raise money for *all* of the Habitat projects across the South Shore, it presents a good opportunity to highlight the Jerusalem Rd. project. Discussion is also underway on having an information table on the project outside the Town's annual town meeting to raise community awareness and involvement.

With regard to the Habitat's request for the AHT to increase their donation of \$75 thousand, Mr. Kierce stated that the Habitat would need to present a financial proposal outlining the overall plan and the amount of money and in-kind donations already raised. Chair Gaumer noted that while the Trust may be open to making an additional donation, its mission is to provide as much funding as possible for a variety of affordable housing projects throughout the community. Also the intent is for the AHT to provide a financial foundation for the project through the prudent use of CPC funding and provide the basis for involving as many stakeholders as possible within the community.

Chair Gaumer began the discussion on the documentation that the CPC needs memorializing the grant agreement with the AHT and the ways in which the Trust intends to apply the funding. Town Meeting voted to appropriate \$250 thousand and an additional amount of at least \$170 thousand will be sought to fund the Elm St. purchase and renovation. Attorney North stated that she has been in touch with town counsel on assisting with the drafting of the agreement.

Further updates include: Cushing Justice Highway is coming online; 1 Pleasant St. is under construction; four units of the Harbor project have been up and running and 55 South Main is under Planning Board review for either condominiums or rentals. As far as the developer's offer for in-lieu-of contribution to 808 Jerusalem Rd., this is not legally possible because the Habitat property is owned by a non-profit and has deeded the property for affordable housing and cannot be reallocated because of a gift-in-kind. Ms. Lind noted that this was a result of a general discussion by the Planning Board for in-lieu-of inclusionary zoning opportunities for developers. This would pertain to new units in the SHI list and not current projects like Jerusalem Rd.

Discussion ensued on the Town's 40B 10% compliance status. Ms. Lind stated that the Town at the current time is about 28 units short of compliance. However, the Town may demonstrate meaningful progress on existing projects to count toward safe harbor status.

Ms. Lind reported that because of water damage to unit in Elm St., the closing has been postponed to February 17th.

Discussion of FY23 goals and updates

Project pipeline – Tom Meade

In Member Meade's absence, Chair Gaumer proposed to appoint a subcommittee of two members to provide an outline for the Elm St. project renovations within its unit and report back to the Trust for its approval.

Upon motion duly made by Select Board Representative Kennedy and seconded by Member Mathieson, it was unanimously voted to approve the appointment of a subcommittee consisting of Members Made and Henry to provide an outline for the Elm St. project renovations. Roll Call Vote: Cindy Matheison-aye, Rob Henry-aye, David Fifer-aye, Diane Kennedy-aye and Chair Steve Gaumer-aye. **Motion passes 5-0, unanimous.**

Communication plan – Cindy Matheison and Ted Carr

Chair Gaumer began the discussion on the AHT support of the Habitat for Humanity upcoming fundraising gala event. Attorney North stated that the AHT is bound by ethics law, but barring any member having a financial interest in Habitat, the AHT may support the fundraising gala as some of the proceeds from that event will go toward support of providing affordable units in Town, and in particular its project on 808 Jerusalem Rd., including posting of the event on the AHT webpage. Chair Gaumer stated he plans on attending the event and encouraged members also to attend. Member Matheison stated she and Member Fifer will meet to discuss the best practices to promulgate the message for individual fundraising. Select Board Representative Kennedy offered to make an introduce to the editor of the town media, *The Anchor*.

Topics of discussion included best ways to explain what affordable housing means in context of Cohasset and having accurate numbers to reflect the average income of local workers as it relates to the need for affordable housing and dispelling misinformation. Chair Gaumer noted in point of fact, while bound by state law, the efforts of the AHT ensure that the Town in the end maintains control of affordable housing construction. Finding ways to keep the Town affordable for families ensures the fabric of public employees and educators to serve the needs of a growing and vibrant community. Ms. Matheison noted the personal testimony of a resident at Town Meeting of her experience as a child growing up in the community and her continuing involvement to contribute to make Cohasset the desirable diversified community it is today.

Chair Gaumer asked Ms. Lind to provide a summary of the Town’s land resources as it applies to the state directive for MBTA multi-family communities for further discussion by the AHT.

Finance plan – Steve Gaumer, Chair

Ms. Lind stated that she will schedule a presentation by the Finance Director of the Trust’s financial position at the March meeting. Chair Gaumer asked Attorney North to provide guidelines on the latitude the Trust has in investing funds over the funds already committed. Attorney North stated that the funds are held by the Town Treasurer per the Trust agreement, and she will investigate further on the question of investment and report back to the Trust.

Member Comments

Chair Gaumer asked for the status of hiring out transcription services for recorded meetings. Select Board Representative Kennedy stated she will follow up with the HR Director, and Ms. Matheison offered to connect with Member Carr on his recommendation for filling the position. Attorney North stated that Open Meeting Law dictates that meeting minutes of a public body are to be created, reviewed and approved within thirty days or no later than the expiration of three meetings, whichever is longer. Member Mathieson stated that she had completed minutes up through June, 2022.

Administrative

Next meeting: March 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 Henry and seconded by Member Fifer, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Roll call vote:

Member Fifer-aye

Select Board Representative Kennedy-aye

Member Matheison-aye

Member Henry-aye

Chair Gaumer-aye

The meeting adjourned at 9:09AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford
Recording Secretary