



Town of Sudbury

Housing Trust

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MINUTES

JANUARY 14, 2021 AT 8:00 AM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Housing Trust Members Present: Chair Cynthia Howe, Vice Chair John Riordan, Kelley Cronin, Janie Dretler, Carmine Gentile, and Robert Hummel

Housing Trust Members Absent: Susan Scotti

Others Present: Director of Planning and Community Development Adam Duchesneau, and Director of the Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO) Liz Rust

Ms. Howe called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM.

1. Minutes: Approve Meeting Minutes of December 23, 2020

Mr. Hummel made a motion to approve the minutes of December 23, 2020. Mr. Gentile seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Cronin – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Absent, Mr. Gentile – Aye, and Mr. Hummel – Aye.

2. 67-73 Nobscot Road – Possible Property Acquisition

a. Status Update and Discussion

Hank Rauch from the Executive Board of the Mayflower Council was in attendance to discuss the topic with the Housing Trust.

Mr. Duchesneau provided a summary of the comments from the department head meeting on December 21, 2020. He indicated there were no significant red flags, but it would still be wise to proceed with caution regarding possibly acquiring the property. Mr. Duchesneau noted the existing easements needed to be researched and confirmed, witnessed soil testing needed to occur, and that the subject property should perhaps be looked at as two separate projects (upper and lower levels) due to the topography of the site.

Mr. Riordan pointed out some type of zoning relief would likely be needed for any type of housing project at the site. He indicated the property had been abandoned so it most likely had lost its nonconforming zoning status. Mr. Riordan stated a project which went through the MGL Chapter 40B permitting process might be the best way to go.

Ms. Howe stated there would absolutely need to be witness soil testing conducted and the culvert underneath the driveway, which provided access to the property, would need to be upgraded.

At this time Ms. Dretler joined the meeting.

Ms. Rust indicated a partnership with the Sudbury Housing Authority (SHA) would be needed in order to move a housing project forward on the property as the Housing Trust does not have enough money on its own to purchase the site.

Ms. Dretler asked why the earlier possible buyer had walked away and if Mr. Rauch had contacted the local Boy Scout groups regarding the possible sale of the property.

Mr. Rauch indicated the Mayflower Council had executed Purchase and Sale Agreements with two different developers in the past. He was not sure why the first developer had backed out of the deal. The second developer, well known to area, had explored the possibility of bringing forth a Dover Amendment zoning relief project (educationally oriented) for the property. However, Mr. Rauch indicated a conversation with the Conservation Coordinator at the time had discouraged them substantially from proceeding forward. Mr. Rauch also indicated the Mayflower Council had been discussing the property for the last four to five years and had kept the local Boy Scout troops in the loop. He noted a number of Mayflower Council members were from Sudbury and he believed they therefore had significant interaction with local community.

Mr. Dretler stated she had heard from people in the community and from within the local Boy Scout troops that they were not aware of the potential sale of the property.

Mr. Rauch stated the buildings on the property pre-dated 1940. Mr. Duchesneau noted if that was the case, the buildings would be subject to the Demolition Delay Bylaw and process. There was then discussion regarding the steps in the Demolition Delay process.

Ms. Dretler asked if any outreach had been conducted with property owner to the north. Mr. Rauch indicated there had not been any outreach conducted.

Amy Lepak from the Sudbury Housing Authority stated the subject property had come up at SHA meeting a few days earlier. She noted development of the property, time wise, would not work with other properties the SHA was considering at this time. However, Ms. Lepak did confirm the SHA was still interested in the property.

Ms. Howe noted the Housing Trust did not have enough money to purchase the property, as Ms. Rust had indicated, so a partnership with the SHA of some type would be needed to move forward.

Ms. Howe suggested the first steps might be to conduct soil testing, easement research, and have a smaller group discussion between the SHA and Housing Trust to further explore a project and any potential development possibilities.

Sheila Cusolito, Executive Director of the Sudbury Housing Authority, indicated the SHA was interested in exploring a development opportunity, but it would be good to have a more substantial discussion between the two entities.

Ms. Cronin and Mr. Riordan volunteered to have further conversations with the SHA about a potential partnership.

There was then discussion about how a Housing Trust subcommittee might function and interact with the SHA.

3. Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

a. Status Update and Discussion on Renewals and Program Changes

Ms. Rust summarized the memorandum she had prepared noting the terms and agreements of existing tenants were ending. She pointed out Community Preservation Act money would not come in until July 1, 2021 at the earliest. Ms. Rust stated that in February of 2021 the term of the ERAP was going to expire and the tenants wanted to know if a third term would be awarded. There was then discussion regarding the question of whether to assist people who had run into financial issues which were not directly related to COVID. Members inquired about allowing assistance to tenants who were already in subsidized housing units and if this practice would be permitted. Ms. Rust noted the Housing Trust could come up with any guidelines which it felt were reasonable. There was then discussion about possibly modifying the parameters of the ERAP in order to allow more people to receive assistance from the ERAP.

At this time Ms. Howe left the meeting.

Mr. Riordan asked how the ERAP applications were processed and payments were distributed. Ms. Rust described the process and noted the Chair of the Housing Trust signed the agreement with the person receiving the assistance.

Mr. Riordan raised questions about what the definition of “COVID impact” would be and how it was defined. Ms. Rust noted the ERAP application currently indicated “COVID-related impact” in order to receive assistance. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of extending the program for a third term and the need to allocate additional funds in order to support this third round of assistance.

Mr. Riordan made a motion to extend the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) for a third term of assistance and to keep COVID-related items as a requirement of the program, but to expand the program to allow those who were already receiving housing assistance or qualified for other forms of housing assistance, to be able to participate in the ERAP, so long as their household income was at or below 50% of the Area Median Income. Mr. Gentile second the motion. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Dretler asked what percentage of the rent the ERAP assistance was providing and Ms. Rust indicated it was approximately 30-33% of rent across all of the tenants participating in the program.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Absent, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Cronin – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Aye, Mr. Gentile – Aye, and Mr. Hummel – Aye.

4. Other Business

a. Housing Trust Community Preservation Act Request

Mr. Riordan noted the Community Preservation Committee had voted unanimously to approve the Housing Trust's allocation funding request to bring it forth to the May 2021 Annual Town Meeting.

b. Monitoring Agent: Old County Road Resale, Maynard Resale, Cold Brook Crossing

Ms. Rust noted the Housing Trust, through the Regional Housing Service Office, had been named a Monitoring Agent through MassHousing. She indicated the Old County Road Resale and the Maynard Resale, were projects where the Housing Trust would be involved. Ms. Rust also asked if the Housing Trust was going to be interested in being the Monitoring Agent in the Monitoring Services Agreement, through the Regional Housing Service Office, for the Cold Brook Crossing residential development. She indicated there would be a small but yearly revenue stream from this project if the Housing Trust decided to take this on.

Mr. Riordan felt it would be good for the Housing Trust to engage in this work and indicated he would support taking on this work.

Mr. Gentile asked if there was a period of commitment for the work and what the cost of the project might be. He wondered why the Housing Trust would not want to be involved. Ms. Rust indicated this work would be in perpetuity but there were ways to transfer the role to another entity down the road. She noted there would be more work in the beginning of the process with the affordable dwelling units during the first five years, but then it would settle into a steadier role. Ms. Rust pointed out this would be a new responsibility for the Housing Trust.

Ms. Cronin made a motion to authorize Liz Rust of the Regional Housing Services Office to sign contacts on behalf of Housing Trust. Mr. Hummel seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Absent, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Cronin – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Abstain, Mr. Gentile – Aye, and Mr. Hummel – Aye.

c. HOME Consortium – Annual Action Plan Update

Ms. Rust provided an update and indicated how HOME Consortium funds might be able to be used in the future. She noted it was designed to be spent on low income rental projects.

At this time Ms. Howe returned to the meeting.

5. State/Regional Updates

a. Economic Development Bill (H.5250)

Ms. Rust stated the bill needed to be signed that day by the Governor in order to go into effect.

b. Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) Sessions for Trusts: (Useful for Nobscot Road)

- i. 1/27 – Development Proforma Review
- ii. 2/3 – Community Support for Affordable Housing

Ms. Rust noted these events might be helpful for Housing Trust members to attend.

c. CHAPA Sessions

- i. 40B Conference sessions: January 14th, January 21st, and January 28th:
<https://www.chapa.org/events/2021-virtual-40b-conference>
- ii. 1/22: Affordable Housing Landscape in a New Administration

Ms. Rust indicated these events might be helpful for Housing Trust members to attend.

Ms. Rust noted the next Housing Trust meeting was on February 11, 2021 at 8:00 AM

At 9:48 AM, Mr. Gentile made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Riordan seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Cronin – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Aye, Mr. Gentile – Aye, and Mr. Hummel – Aye.