



Town of Sudbury

Housing Trust

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MINUTES

JANUARY 13, 2022 AT 8:00 AM

VIRTUAL MEETING

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

Housing Trust Members Absent: Kelley Cronin and Susan Scotti

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

Mr. Riordan, as the Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:09 AM.

1. Minutes: Approve Meeting Minutes of December 9, 2021, if presented

Mr. Riordan noted the minutes from December 9, 2021 were not included in the meeting materials and therefore the topic would be deferred to the Housing Trust's February 10, 2022 meeting.

At this time Ms. Howe joined the meeting and resumed duties as Chair.

2. Financial Update

- Vote to Ratify the FY22 November Transactions

Ms. Rust provided a brief overview of what the transactions entailed.

Ms. Dretler made a motion to ratify the FY22 November Transactions. Mr. Hummel seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Aye, Mr. Gentile – Aye, Mr. Hummel – Aye, and Mr. Pops – Aye.

At this Ms. Dretler left the meeting.

- Financial Statements – Completed for FY21

Ms. Rust indicated the audit for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2021 had been completed.

3. 2021 Annual Report

Ms. Rust noted the general topics covered in the Annual Report were the same from previous years and overall the report provided a summary of the Housing Trust's activities in 2021.

Ms. Howe felt the first paragraph was not as strong as it could be and was hoping to perhaps make a few changes with more details.

Mr. Riordan made a motion to approve the 2021 Annual Report and to authorize the Chair to modify the first paragraph of the report at their discretion. Mr. Pops seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Aye, Mr. Gentile – Aye, Mr. Hummel – Aye, and Mr. Pops – Aye.

8. Rental Assistance – Review Program Materials

Ms. Valenta provided an overview of the parameters of the program and felt the details were fairly close to being finalized. She discussed the proposed monthly rent thresholds and monthly utility assistance payments. Ms. Valenta also covered the details of the application process for the program.

Mr. Riordan stated he wanted to see the Section 8 rental assistance removed from the proposed ineligibility criteria for the program. He felt these were people in the community who were on the razor's edge of making ends meet and they should be afforded as much housing assistance as possible.

Ms. Howe noted the parameters of the program would loop in most people, but the idea of the program was to not be a long-term rental assistance program. However, she stated she would be supportive of making modifications where these Section 8 households could sometimes qualify (in emergency situations) for assistance from the program.

There was then discussion on how to handle Section 8 households and how they would or would not be eligible for the program.

At this time Ms. Dretler rejoined the meeting.

The Housing Trust determined they desired to eliminate the Section 8, MRVP, and Housing Authority programs from the ineligibility requirements.

Mr. Riordan made a motion to adopt the parameters of the rental assistance program with the removals of the Section 8, MRVP, and Housing Authority programs from the ineligibility requirements. Mr. Hummel second the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Abstain, Mr. Gentile – Aye, Mr. Hummel – Aye, and Mr. Pops – Aye.

Ms. Rust noted the intent was to make a February 1, 2022 rollout of the rental assistance program.

At this time Mr. Hummel left the meeting.

4. Sudbury Housing Trust – Draft Bylaw

Ms. Howe noted she had sat in on the last Select Board meeting where this matter was discussed and it had been deferred to their January 18, 2022 meeting.

Ms. Rust indicated the Town had never adopted a local bylaw for the Housing Trust as agreed upon when the Declaration of Trust was created and recorded. As such, the creation of this local bylaw is somewhat of an administrative action, but at the same time it presents an opportunity to perhaps make some adjustments to the Declaration of Trust.

Mr. Riordan expressed his frustration with the deadline requested by the Select Board to provide comments back to them. He felt more time was needed to review the proposed draft bylaw to provide thoughtful comments.

Ms. Rust noted that without a local bylaw the Housing Trust cannot operate differently than the parameters laid out in the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL). She indicated that since there was currently no local bylaw in place, there were certain parameters laid out in the Declaration of Trust by which the Housing Trust did not technically need to adhere too. The proposed local bylaw would formally put these parameters in place. Ms. Rust noted the local bylaw was only required if the community wanted to do something different than what was required in the MGL. Since some of the agreed upon parameters were different from what was in the MGL, it would seem appropriate to implement the local bylaw.

Mr. Gentile indicated it would be helpful to have a memorandum which summarized the proposed changes to the Declaration of Trust and what they would mean for the operational parameters of the Housing Trust. He noted there was plenty of time to bring this matter before the Housing Trust earlier.

Mr. Gentile made a motion to express reservations to the proposed local bylaw presented by the Select Board, to reject the proposed local bylaw as there had been no explanation as to why this was necessary as opposed to the status quo, to reject any currently proposed implementation of the local bylaw and due to inadequate ability for timely consideration of the matter, and that the Housing Trust would commit to reviewing and commenting on the proposed bylaw within 120 days. Mr. Riordan seconded the motion. Discussion on the motion ensued.

Ms. Howe questioned that since the Housing Trust had been operating for 16 years, was there any rush to bring this matter forth to the May 2022 Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Dretler indicated there was nothing requiring this matter to be brought forth to the next possible Town Meeting.

Mr. Riordan wondered if the Housing Trust should engage independent counsel on the matter. Ms. Howe stated it was probably a good idea to, at a minimum, speak with Town Counsel on the matter. Ms. Rust clarified Town Counsel had indicated the proposed local bylaw essentially contained the same operational items currently laid out in the Declaration of Trust.

Pat Brown of 34 Whispering Pine Road noted the appointment of the Housing Trust members was already laid out in MGL and even though these steps had been omitted from the proposed local bylaw, the language was already in MGL.

Mr. Riordan stated he felt concerned about the perceived need to move forward quickly with this issue and it did not sit well with him.

Ms. Dretler indicated she could make the request to the Select Board that the matter be deferred to a future Town Meeting, beyond May of 2022, to allow more time for all parties involved to review and understand the proposed local bylaw.

Mr. Gentile then made the following revised motion:

- To request additional time to review any currently proposed bylaw since there is presently inadequate ability for timely consideration of the matter.
- To express reservations to the proposed bylaw presented by the Select Board as there has been no explanation as to why, at this time, this is new bylaw is necessary as opposed to the status quo.
- To commit to reviewing and commenting on the proposed bylaw within 120 days, including requesting to meet with Town Counsel to review the matter, if approved by the Town Manager.

Mr. Riordan seconded the revised motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Aye, Mr. Gentile – Aye, Mr. Hummel – Absent, and Mr. Pops – Aye.

Mr. Riordan noted there was no language regarding holding meetings, appointment of Trustees, etc. within the proposed local bylaw and he requested the Housing Trust follow up on these points. Ms. Rust noted these particular points are listed in the Declaration of Trust.

5. Update on Community Preservation Coordinator Position

Mr. Duchesneau provided a positive update and indicated the proposed position was still tracking to be a part of the FY23 Town Budget for the May 2022 Annual Town Meeting.

9. 67-73 Nobscot Road – Site Feasibility Analysis Update

Mr. Duchesneau indicated he did not have a significant update on the site feasibility analysis and was still awaiting information from the consultant, Beals + Thomas. He noted approximately 40% of the funding allocated for this project had been spent through the end of November 2021.

Mr. Duchesneau then read into the record a recent email he had received from David LaPointe at Beals + Thomas which indicated they had been working on the study, including performing the wetland delineation, surveying of the property, and preparing a base plan of the study area. The email also indicated Beals + Thomas had prepared drafts of three development scenarios: one keeping the existing structures (which may not be feasible/economical) and adding additional units; one with single-family units; and one with a combination of single-family units and duplexes.

The Housing Trust agreed a 67-73 Nobscot Road Subcommittee meeting should be scheduled in the near future and Beals + Thomas should provide their materials to the Subcommittee at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Ms. Rust advocated for the Housing Trust and Sudbury Housing Authority to explore the possibility of implementing some three-bedroom units in any proposed project.

6. HOME Program – Annual Action Plan Discussion

Ms. Valenta noted it was the Annual Action Plan time of year so she would be exploring any possible projects for Sudbury to use their annual funding allocation. She also indicated the amount of funding the Town received on an annual basis was very small and there may not be an opportunity this year to use any of the HOME Program funding.

There was then discussion as to which types of households in a potential project could qualify for the usage of this funding.

7. Mortgage Assistance – Review Program Materials

Discussion on this topic was deferred to the February 2022 meeting.

Public Comment

There were no additional public comments.

Other or New Business

There was no discussion under this topic.

At 9:51 AM, Mr. Riordan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Dretler seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Howe – Aye, Mr. Riordan – Aye, Ms. Dretler – Aye, Mr. Gentile – Aye, Mr. Hummel – Absent, and Mr. Pops – Aye.