

MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST MINUTES
July 2, 2014

Members present: Town Manager: Rick Reed
Selectman: Mike Rosenberg
BHP: Irma Carter, Lisa Mustapich, Christina Wilgren; Alice Sun
Others: Assistant Town Manager: Jessica Porter
Liz Rust, Dan Gaulin – RHSO
Absent: Mark Siegenthaler

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm

Minutes of June 16, 2014

Rosenberg moved to approve the minutes of June 16 with minor corrections.
Sun seconded. VOTE 5-0 in favor.

Shawsheen Ridge Condos

The RHSO distributed the background information for Unit 3. [In 1986, the developer of the Shawsheen Ridge Condominiums – in return for increased density, made 6 units available to the town for affordable housing. A few years later the state would introduce a similar plan - Local Initiative Program under Ch40B – which would encourage the same kind of cooperative ventures. This was not available in 1986 so the 6 Shawsheen units do not count towards the Affordable Housing Inventory. However, the housing at Bedford Meadows was constructed as a LIP and those affordable units were added to the AHI.

Review of Town By-law and State Statute

Members reviewed the authority and powers of the trust as published in the documents in light of a potential involvement of the Town in the disposition of the Pine Hill Road/Coast Guard housing. It was a long discussion which raised as many questions as it answered.

First, could the MAHT buy the property? It was confirmed/affirmed that the MAHT can act independently of Town Meeting but still has to conform to the provisions of CH30B – e.g. over \$25K requires sealed bids. Perhaps the property could be designated as “unique” to bypass some of the language. Would the potential Pine Hill development (“Bedford affordable”) qualify as affordable? Use of the CPA funds requires Town Meeting action. In past they have been used to bring down the cost to create affordable housing in Patriot Place, Habitat for Humanity. There is a precedent. Should the town take ownership of the land? Should the town find a developer partner that we could work with to buy the property?

Do we need to start drafting language for fall town meeting to use CPC funds?

We could use the MAHT funds to offset the cost of building the town’s “vision.” We’ve had mixed developments in the past – affordable-market. One possibility - The Trust can purchase the property. Do we have the ability to bid beyond our resources? The MAHT’s by-laws allow it to borrow. Sun stressed the need for a professional appraisal. If we think we want to bid, we should not pay more than it is worth- what is our maximum bid? Once the property is sold, it is no longer federal property and is subject to town zoning. What could a developer do by right?

The zoning on that parcel is one acre – so five house lots. Someone could make a case for tearing down the existing 16 houses and reconstructing 16 houses on the existing footprint. They could make taller structures. The ZBA would have to decide. The balance in the trust is \$471K – we have committed \$26K for the small grant program – plus \$1.1 million in CP funds – combined about \$1.5 million. CP funds require TM action to use. Group also discussed possibility of a bridge type loan. It was agreed that the land could be easy to buy but would be difficult to sell. Is this the best use of Trust’s funds? Is having the Town bid the most practical way to do this? Are there bidders we could work with? Once we bought it, could we subsidize construction to lower cost of units? The fallback position could always be a version of 5 BIG houses. Do we advertise for developers? No date set yet for the auction of the property. We expect the auction period to be around the end of July – who would endorse this in the name of the town?

Agreed:

We need to run this past Town Counsel

Ashby Place

Town Meeting supported the updating of kitchens and baths in the spring using CPC funds. Meanwhile, the state changed the ground rules stating that CPC funds can’t be used for maintenance unless the units were constructed with CPC funds. One proposal is for CPC to give the funds to the MAHT then have the trust pass them along to the Bedford Housing Authority. Although actual construction is a year away, the BHA needs \$216K for the design phase of the project. DHCD needs to assurance in writing that the BHA has funds for the project but will not allow BHA to use CPC funds voted by the town. In this same time period, the MAHT may need full access to its funds to “do a deal” for the Pine Hill Road property. The BHA design stage will be 10% of the total – maybe \$20K – at most, the MAHT could advance the start up dollars. We need to run this past Town Counsel. If Town Counsel says, the most the MAHT would be risking is \$21K.

Next meeting of the Bedford Housing Partnership is July 16 –

Meeting adjourned at 8:40.

Recorded: Irma Carter

Approved June 16, 2014