

Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Monday, December 5, 2022
Meeting Location: Mayor's Conference Room
Members in Attendance: Co-Chair Susanne Cameron, Co-Chair Madeline Nash, Brian Raiche, Robert Currier
Staff Present: Katelyn Sullivan, Planner, Andy Port, Planning Director
Members of the public: John Feehan, YWCA

Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust (AHT or Trust) Co-Chair Susanne Cameron called the meeting to order at 6pm. Cameron informed Trust members that Andrew Shapiro would soon be joining the Trust as the newest member. Katelyn Sullivan from the Planning Office said that she would send Trust members Shapiro's appointment letter, cover letter and resume. Cameron then opened the meeting up to public comment. John Feehan, YWCA spoke during the public comment period section of the agenda.

Feehan presented to the Trust that the YWCA Greater Newburyport manages two affordable housing programs in the City of Newburyport, YWCA Market Street Apartments (MSA) and YWCA at Hillside (Hillside). As of this current tax cycle, MSA has been assessed \$11,556 in property taxes and Hillside \$12,447 in property taxes. Annually YWCA submits to the Assessor's office Form 3ABC. In the past, this form has served to exempt all YWCA property from taxes (13 Market Street, which includes the pool, fitness center and affordable housing, and 11 Market Street). YWCA currently pays property tax for its YWCA Children's Center located at 13 ½ Pond Street and owned by Quincy Development.

Feehan said that in 2022 the YWCA submitted Form 3ABC with the addition of 27 Cottage Court which is the new YWCA at Hillside affordable housing project. This year, YWCA was informed that neither 11 Market Street nor 27 Cottage Court qualified for tax exemption. Both were subsequently valued at what appears to be full market value. The YWCA is working with the Mayor's office to find a solution to the assessed value of these properties that would result in a substantially lower tax burden. However, as it stands, both properties currently owe an unabated tax bill.

Planning Director Port said that he would check in with the Assessor's Office and Katelyn Sullivan from the Planning Office said that she would inform the Trust of the response from the Assessor's Office at an upcoming meeting.

Sullivan informed the Trust that applications for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding must be submitted no later than 12:00 p.m., Friday, December 16, 2022. Sullivan provided the Trust with a draft CPA application for a new First-Time Homebuyers Program which will expand the current Down Payment Assistance Program. Sullivan also provided program guidelines and application. Member Brian Raiche made a motion that the Trust submit the application to the Community Preservation Committee as reviewed tonight. Co-Chair Nash seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Sullivan informed the Trust that the city's Housing Production Plan will need to be updated over the next year and will involve a community/stakeholder process. The Planning Office sent out the RFP to local affordable housing consultants and has received several requests for the RFP. Proposals are due back to

us 12/9. Sullivan said at an upcoming meeting the Trust should discuss the consultant selection process and if the AHT wants to designate one or more people to review proposals.

Planning Director Andy Port gave an update regarding the Brown School Ad Hoc Committee. Port said the Committee is currently discussing goals, concerns, costs and future use of the Brown School. Discussion has focused on the future of the existing gym space. Nash said that the process has been a little frustrating so far but having the facilitator from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership has been helpful and to hear from the ward councilors has been beneficial. Port said that the next step is to move towards issuing an RFI.

Port also mentioned that the City will be ramping up local discussion of an Action Plan for MBTA Communities with options/preferences in greater detail in the coming weeks/months. Port said that there would be a role for the Trust and asked if a member wanted to be the Trust designee for any sort of small group discussion. Member Robert Currier volunteered.

Co-Chair Nash reviewed the 2022 AHT Goals and Priorities list and said it was a good time to take stock of the Trust accomplishments and where the Trust wants to take its goals for the next year. The 2022 Trust goals included work to promote increased visibility of the work and mission of the AHT within the community, update the Housing Production Plan, continue to provide rental assistance, collaborate with the City and community interest groups on plans for the redevelopment of the Brown School as affordable rental housing for seniors, collaborate with the City to assess the local Housing Rehabilitation Program and collaborate with local developers and property owners which share the AHT's mission.

The Trust discussed the next meeting date.

The meeting adjourned at 8pm.