



# Town of Ashland

M A S S A C H U S E T T S

**Affordable Housing Trust Fund**  
**101 Main Street**  
**Ashland, MA 01721**

## **MINUTES**

March 18, 2021

Trustees in attendance: Steve Greenberg, Joe Magnani, Debra Griffin, David Rosenblum, Alan Galiwango, Bernadette Lunkuse, Barbra Sekesogundu Simon

Trustees absent:

Guests: Emma Snellings (Assistant Town Planner), Cathy Van Lancker

Zoom Meeting called to order at 3:13pm by Steve.

Motion to approve minutes of meeting of February 18, 2021 as written made by Debra, seconded by Alan, passed 4-0-1.

Emma gave us the quarterly rental assistance program update. \$150,581 has been allocated in 46 applications with 6 applications in the last 3 months. No new mortgage assistance applications because we are using AHT funds which can only be used for deed restricted homes. Money from AHT funds totals \$31,500 with 19,500 dispersed and \$12,000 more committed. Applications have slowed down and the assistance program is running smoothly.

Steve asked about new federal money allotted to Massachusetts. Emma said the money for rental assistance is going to state programs. Joe said that the town is getting considerable funds from the state, over 5 million dollars, to be used in next 2 years. Joe suggested we ask the town manager for \$50,000 of this money. Joe asked if the town is helping assistance program recipients get employment. Emma said she refers people to Jennifer Wuelfing in the town's Human Services department and to state level rental assistance. Debra asked if Emma has information about how applicants found out about the program. Emma only had anecdotal information. Debra suggested that this question should be added to the application. We all agreed with that. Steve asked how important the 4<sup>th</sup> month extension was. Emma said she would ask in the survey she is working on. Emma

said that landlords were working with their tenants, but she felt that many renters were not keeping up with their rents.

Steve brought up extending rental assistance to 4 months for all. Steve said he was concerned about April 1 when rent is due. Emma said that the town could not issue checks by April 1. Debra pointed out that we had additional month of rental assistance available now to those facing eviction. Joe pointed out that evictions take time to put into force. Emma calculated that adding a 4<sup>th</sup> month to all renters receiving our rental assistance would cost about \$35,000 and extending 3 months for all would cost \$105,000.

Emma is working on a draft demographic survey that she will send to the trust soon.

The idea of sending an email to all those receiving rental assistance asking about having 4<sup>th</sup> month available was brought up. Emma and others did not want to do that. Emma suggested an open ended question on the demographic survey where this issue could be addressed. The consensus was that this was a good idea.

Pond Street rental project was discussed. This is 501 Pond St at property next to the assisted living facility. Steve explained that this is zoned as part of an affordable overlay district with 10% affordable units required. The developer offered 15% affordable in a total of 123 units. Joe told us about a new design with 145 rental units and 25% affordable units. The larger design would have less open space.

Steve told us that the Robert Hill Way development is stopping at 1 building because the developer does not have the resources to complete the project.

Joe suggested we invite the Pond Street developer to one of our meetings. Steve said that he had already done that and received no response. Joe said he would contact the developer.

We discussed Community Preservation Committee (CPC) funding on land owned by the AHT. The issue is whether there are sufficient deed riders on the properties. Steve thought there were no deed restrictions on 6 Cherry St and 125 Front St. Cathy Van Lanker, Conservation Commissioner and Community Preservation Committee representative of the Conservation Commission spoke. Cathy said we need to do what is right. The question “who puts deed restrictions on the property, the CPC or the AHT?” was asked. Steve and Cathy thought that a “holder” organization was needed to enforce the restrictions. Cathy will clarify this issue with the Community Preservation Act Consortium.

Steve told us about a refinance approval request from owner of 26 John Hancock Dr. Refinancing triggers repayment of down payment assistance of \$5000 to the

town from the owner. Steve made a motion to approve the refinance and to send a letter to DHCD stating our approval. Motion seconded by David. Motion passed 5-0.

Debra updated action item list. Barbrea has been getting emails though the AHT email address. Steve said that CHAPA does monitoring of rentals only, so does not help us with need for monitoring owned deed restricted homes. Steve said we have recap of sales in a form only showing public info. This was sent by Emma to the trust. Nothing has been done with the lottery survey. Steve asked for questions. Debra offered to draft the survey so we can discuss and vote on it at our next meeting. Steve told us that the AHT is now a member of CHAPA. Town has written a check for membership of \$750. Bernadette is taking over collecting plans for meeting agendas (with Debra helping for now). Emma will do rental assistance survey and add questions to application. Joe will contact town counsel about deed restrictions needed on town properties. Steve said that publicity of the rental assistance program could say "we still have funds".

Joe left the meeting at 4:55pm.

Motion to adjourn made by Debra, seconded by David, passed 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 4:56 pm.

Next meeting will be April 15, 2021 3-5pm.

Documents discussed:

none