



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Affordable Housing Trust Fund
101 Main Street
Ashland, MA 01721

MINUTES

April 15, 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), Jerry Effren Atty for 501 Pond St project, Catherine Jurczyk, Lars Unhjem developer of 501 Pond St, mb/mbelinski (off video, not talking)

Zoom Meeting called to order at 3:15pm by Steve.

Motion to approve minutes of meeting of March 18, 2021 as written made by Joe, seconded by Debra, passed 5-0.

Lars Unhjem shared his screen. His company, Villebridge Real Estate Development, is developing 501 Pond Street property. He is concerned with long term rental apartments and improving opportunities to live in a better home. Lars has worked on many projects. The Pond St site is on 4 acres in the Pond Street revitalization overlay district. This requires 10% affordable homes at 80% AMI with optional density bonus for more affordable units. Lars showed us two concepts; one was mixed use with 150 apartments with 25% affordable units with ground floor commercial space. The other concept had 123 apartments with 15% affordable and no commercial space. Lars said that he builds affordable units with the same features as market based units. Debra asked about apartments with less than 80% AMI. Lars said that this was possible but not financially easy. Alan asked about commercial space. Lars said that his analysis of the location showed that profitable mission based commercial space was not possible at that location because there was a lot of unused commercial space already in the area. Steve mentioned that the architect for this project was the same one who designed the assisted living facility

next door. Joe asked about storm water. Lars said it could be handled underground. He also said that zoning specified ground floor front facing commercial space, but the commercial space is not required by the zoning.

Emma updated us on the Emergency Rental Assistance program. She said it was going well. Emma went through the draft questionnaire. Barbra asked about veteran's status and race and ethnicity and about combining questions. It was asked whether survey was for individual applicant or whole household. Emma said it currently is for the applicant only. Debra suggested that races of ALL individuals in the household be included, others agreed. For race and ethnicity an "other" fill-in choice was suggested. Alan asked about income ranges. Debra asked about communications with the managers of the program. Debra and Barbra suggested a question "how did you hear about the program". Joe brought up having a question asking about assistance from other sources before the program, during the program and after the program ended for the applicant. Debra suggested that Emma send out an edited survey to all of us for comments and that we should reply individually to Emma, not reply all. Debra asked about need to have google email to reply to the survey. Emma said that the survey was anonymous and did not require a google email.

Debra brought up publicity for the program. Emma talked to Ashley Place who handles social media and publicity for the town about this. Emma said she was getting the materials translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Debra asked about Asian, Russian and other languages. Emma said they will look at the percentages of folks speaking other languages within Ashland, and the highest ones will get translations. Debra noted that the program is still not being mentioned in Michael Herbert's weekly Town Manager newsletter, and suggests it gets mentioned, even briefly, each week, and asked again that it get posted in the Ashland newspaper. Emma said that landlords have gotten involved in the program.

Steve reminded us about the Housing Production Plan forum on 4/29/21.

Steve updated us on the 281 America Boulevard deed restricted home potentially available for acquisition and resale. Steve said the owners had moved out of state and that the unit was well kept. Steve made a motion that the trust approve the sale by the current owner and take whatever steps needed to resell the unit. Seconded by Joe. Joe asked about the price for the unit. Steve said the price is decided by DHCD (Department of Housing and Community Development) and should be in the \$220,000 to \$230,000 range. Motion passed 5-0. Steve mentioned that a house on Raymond Marchetti would be sold in the next few months.

The scope of work for monitors was sent out to about a dozen firms. Steve said we have heard back from 3 of them. Steve will follow up at the end of April. It looks like monitoring 40 units will cost less than \$8000 annually.

Joe brought up having affordable units with income limits less than 80% of AMI. Steve said that the planning board works these things out with developers and Steve suggested that we talk to the planning board about providing financial assistance to allow lower AMI units.

Debra asked about the SHI numbers that Lars Unhjem shared in his presentation. Main Street project is in discussion. UGL rail transit district development worked out with ZBA (zoning board of appeals).

Debra asked about the Google forms lottery survey (that she drafted for us to review (about participation in the 2020 lotteries): would it cost the Trust money for it to be done? Steve said that Lynn Sweet would not charge us for distributing the survey. In terms of edits to the draft: we needed another category on one question and we will use check boxes to allow multiple answers. We discussed how to distribute the survey. Emma said she will put the form on the Town drive and send the google survey link to Lynn Sweet to distribute. Results will go to Emma who will share them at the next meeting. Joe asked if google translate could make the survey available in Portuguese and Spanish. Emma will check on this.

David suggested that we eliminate the “old and new business” and “other matters that may arise” items from our agendas. The statement at the end of the agenda, “This agenda is subject to change...” covers what can be discussed at the meeting. All agreed with this.

We were updated on the status of properties acquired with Article 97 CPC funds. Town Counsel said that 6 Cherry St has no deed restrictions. Joe will work with Steve on this. 125 Front St and Olive St property need to be looked at. Beth Reynolds has contacted Habitat for Humanity and is waiting for a reply.

Open action items are Steve following up on monitors and Joe following up on deed restrictions.

Motion to adjourn made by David, seconded by Debra, passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 4:58 pm.

Next meeting will be May 20, 2021 3-5pm.

Documents discussed:

501 Pond St presentation

Google survey