

CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MEETING MINUTES
October 22, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Conducted virtually via Zoom

Trustees Present via Zoom: Louis DePasquale, Chair; Bill Tibbs, Peter Daly, Florrie Darwin, Elaine DeRosa, Gwen Noyes, Susan Schlesinger, Jim Stockard

Trustees Absent: Elaine Thorne

Staff Present via Zoom: Iram Farooq, Asst. City Manager for CDD; Chris Cotter, Housing Director; Cassie Arnaud, Housing Planner; Janet Haines, Associate Housing Planner; Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison to the City Manager; Linda Prosnitz, Housing Planner; Emily Salomon, Associate Housing Planner

Others Present via Zoom: Bo Fuji, Duane Halper

The acting chair, Jim Stockard, called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. prior to the Chair joining the meeting. Chris Cotter explained that this meeting of the Affordable Housing Trust would be held virtually pursuant to the temporary emergency orders currently in place, and that all votes would be taken by roll call, and that there would be no public comment. Mr. Cotter then coordinated to confirm that each participant was audible to each of the other Trust members.

The Chair, City Manager DePasquale joined the meeting at 4:08 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Upon a motion moved and seconded, it was voted unanimously by roll call to approve the minutes for the meeting of Thursday, September 24, 2020.

UPDATE FROM CDD

Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO): The Affordable Housing Overlay was ordained by the City Council on October 5, 2020. The Overlay is effective immediately and is now available for new development projects. Staff have begun to hear from affordable housing providers about new opportunities for affordable housing development.

Trust members and staff reflected on the efforts to pass the AHO, which began with discussions several years ago. The process included hearing from many community voices not typically heard from in other planning efforts, and it is expected that the zoning overlay and associated design guidelines could be a model for other communities. The Trust celebrated this accomplishment and encouraged staff to consider what's next as far as new affordable housing policies, including other ideas outlined in the Envision Cambridge community planning process.

HomeBridge: There are six approved buyers seeking units with three homes under agreement. Inventory is limited, but approved buyers continue to look for units to purchase. To date, 68 units have

been purchased by first-time homebuyers through HomeBridge and the city's prior financial assistance programs.

Homeownership Resale Pool: In response to COVID-19, city staff are adapting the typical process to show new units to prospective buyers in the Resale waiting pool, such as virtual open houses.

Finch Cambridge: Construction is complete and the property is fully leased up and occupied. Due to the pandemic, HRI has been unable to showcase the property to the public but is working with the City to provide a video tour/virtual walk-through of the building.

Frost Terrace: Construction is underway and proceeding after pandemic-related delays. Construction is anticipated to be complete by late-Winter/early-Spring 2021. The construction delays incurred significant cost increases, which are being monitored by City staff.

Vail Court: Litigation continues with no news to report as the case continues.

2072 Mass Ave.: Capstone/Hope held their first public meeting for the project in September 2020. They have published a website, which includes many of the questions and comments that emerged at the community meeting. Their goal is to secure permitting and financing to allow construction to begin in 2022.

SquirrelWood: Construction was delayed due to the pandemic but is on schedule to be completed in early 2021. Some units are already online, and others will be phased-in over the next few months. The construction delays incurred significant cost increases, which are being monitored by staff.

Fresh Pond Apartments: HUD has approved the terms of the new affordability program terms for the remaining third of the units which will take effect when the current use agreement expires. HUD has also approved the owner's request for Enhanced Vouchers which will facilitate the transition to the new affordable program. The Cambridge Housing Authority will be administering the Enhanced Vouchers. Staff are working with the owner on scheduling a tenant meeting to share these updates and discuss next steps. The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for early November.

Trust members complimented City staff on their hard work over several years to preserve these units. The Trust also noted the City's success with regard to all of the prior expiring-use projects over the past 10 years, leading up to the success of Fresh Pond Apartments.

Rindge Commons: The Board of Zoning Appeals voted to approve a comprehensive permit for the project on August 23, 2020. Just A Start is in the process of securing the necessary financing to begin construction of Phase 1 and will be applying for state funding in the upcoming application round.

52 New Street: Just A Start is starting to plan for the development of their New Street site, including the community and permitting processes, with a goal to secure permitting and financing to begin construction in 2022. This could be the first Affordable Housing Overlay project as they explore their development options for the site.

ParkView Cooperative: City staff met with Cooperative residents in early October to discuss their concerns about the City's proposed terms and conditions and to identify areas that are workable for the

residents. The Cooperative is revising their operating budget for the Trust and reviewing resident selection language and affordability restrictions in place for other Trust-funded projects. The building heating system, a concern noted in the September discussion, will be repaired prior to the winter months, and will allow for more time more time to finalize the Trust's funding terms and conditions and ensure a mutually agreeable solution is in place.

55 Wheeler Street: The project is back at the Planning Board. The Inclusionary Housing plan has been reviewed and will be complete once the Planning Board completes its review.

Sullivan Court House Redevelopment: The Inclusionary Housing Plan is under review. Developers will apply for a building permit by early November 2020. There will be 48 affordable units at this site of the old courthouse on Thorndike Street.

Housing Stabilization Program (HSP): The City continues to offer emergency housing assistance to residents through the Housing Stabilization Program which provides funds to income-eligible residents to help with partial rental payments. HSP assists households paying more than 40% of their income on rent and is supported with Community Preservation Act (CPA) and HUD CDBG funds. The program recently increased assistance offered from 2 to up-to 4 months. City staff are monitoring the ongoing need for program.

Resident Experience Study: After two-rounds of issuing RFPs, the City has selected the National initiative on Mixed Income Communities at Case Western Reserve University to conduct the City's resident experience study to understand issues of bias in inclusionary properties. The study should launch in the coming months.

Upcoming Housing and Ordinance Committee Meetings: A discussion of inclusionary preferences will be discussed at the upcoming Housing Committee meeting, later tonight. The Housing Committee will meet again next week to discuss legal strategies to prevent evictions and housing risks for residents due to pandemic. The next Ordinance Committee will also meet next week to discuss a proposed home rule petition to establish transfer fee for real estate transactions, which would generate funds to Trust.

NEW BUSINESS

Design Guidelines for Affordable Housing Overlay: The design guidelines are now in place and will be referenced as affordable housing developers bring project forward to the planning board.

Trust members noted that the Guidelines work on paper, but that issues could arise as they are applied to individual projects. With as-of-right development, there can be contradictions site by site, and the guidelines layout the process by which we would want a developer to look at a new building. Trust members suggested the idea of establishing a subcommittee to review and endorse the guidelines, and to think through the Trust's role in reviewing projects utilizing the Overlay to ensure they proceed smoothly.

Staff will be preparing updates to the Trust rules and regulations and it may be a place to include reference to how the Trust might use these guidelines consider funding requests for AHO and other new projects.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm upon a motion moved and seconded, with absent, by roll call of **eight** in favor and **one** absent. The next meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2020.

Materials:

- Meeting Minutes from the Trust's September 24, 2020 meeting
- Project update: Status of Active Commitments
- October 22, 2020 Memo: Design Guidelines for Affordable Housing Overlay
- Design Guidelines for Affordable Housing Overlay