

Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday, June 30, 2022
Meeting Location: City Hall Auditorium
Members in Attendance: Co-Chair Susanne Cameron, Co-Chair Madeline Nash, Robert Currier and Andrew Levine for Mayor Reardon and Karen Weiner
Staff Present: Katelyn Sullivan, Planner
Members of the public: City Councilor Jim McCauley

Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust (Trust or AHT) Co-Chair Madeline Nash called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. A quorum of the Trust was present. Katelyn Sullivan, Planning Office updated the Trust that the City applied for an Underutilized Properties grant through the Community One Stop Program to engage the services of architects, engineers, and other related professionals to develop design and construction documents for capital improvement and code compliance of the Brown School. The Trust sent in a letter of support recognizing the importance of leveraging this municipal property for the creation of new affordable housing units as it is the only "surplus" municipal property with substantive size or potential for this purpose.

Next Co-Chair Susanne Cameron provided brief update regarding Short Term Rental Units (STRUs). The Newburyport Planning Board and City Council (acting through its Planning & Development Committee) held a Joint Public Hearing on 6/15/22. The purpose of the Public Hearing was to present, and hear testimony and comment from interested persons relative to proposed amendments and additions to the Zoning Ordinance for the City of Newburyport. There is one (1) proposed ordinance amendment:

(ODNC046_01_27_2020): Add to the Newburyport Zoning Ordinance a new residential use category referred to as "Short Term Rental Units," and specify additional requirements and/or restrictions applicable to such use, including, but not limited to the requirement for a Special Permit and/or a license issued by the Licensing Commission pursuant to a related non-zoning Ordinance amendment also under consideration.

Co-Chair Cameron invited Councilor Jim McCauley to give a high-level overview of the proposed ordinance (above). The Trust agreed that the proposed ordinance aligned with the Trust's mission and agreed to send in a letter of support to the Planning Board/City Council.

Sullivan provided an update regarding CPA funding. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) voted to recommend to City Council \$230,000 in CPA funding for two projects: (1) a 'set-aside' of \$200,000 for affordable housing development initiatives (including the Brown School), and (2) \$30,000 to be used for consultant services to update to the City's Housing Production Plan (HPP). The CPC Recommendations have been submitted to the City Council and will be discussed at an upcoming City Council Budget and Finance meeting on 7/14. We have sent the AHT 2022 Strategic Plan to the Budget and Finance Committee to review while considering the application for funding.

Sullivan provided an update on the Newburyport Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Sullivan reported that the Emergency Rental Assistance funds have assisted eight (8) households including (3 seniors, 7 adults and 7 children) to date with \$17,811 in rental funds and Pettengill House administrative costs in the amount of \$1,781.10 totaling \$19,592.10 funds spent. There is \$5,407.90 remaining in funding (\$4,689) in rental funds. Sullivan also can an update regarding the new expanded rental assistance program. The Planning Office, per the vote of the AHT, sought legal review from KP Law of the new expanded program (Covid rent, new rent and current rent/arrears). KP Law responded that there were no particular concerns with the materials (application and guidelines) provided for their review. Sullivan reminded the group that electronic application forms have been developed by the Pettengill House staff and that she is working with the Pettengill House marketing staff to begin prepping outreach for the expanded program.

Co-Chair Cameron discussed the current Newburyport Housing Rehabilitation Program which is run out of the Senior Center. Cameron said that the program is largely inactive and she would like to think about revamping the program to make it more useful and wants to see if there can be more emphasis on green building practices as a revamp is considered.

During the updates from the Co-Chairs section of the agenda the Co-Chairs discussed the new 2022 Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust Strategic Plan. Cameron said this is to be a working document and can be added to at any time. Cameron went over the plan which included

1. Work to promote increased visibility of the work and mission of the AHT within the community. This will encourage partnerships and build support for our initiatives. Action steps: meet quarterly with the Council Planning and Development Committee; submit articles to the Daily News about local housing concerns; collaborate with the Planning Board on zoning that pertains to affordable housing.
2. Update Housing Production Plan – the current plan expires in 2022. Action steps: submit an application to the CPC requesting funds to hire a consultant to work with City to update the plan; develop an RFP to send to a list of consultants; develop a scope of services which includes community education on local and regional housing needs with and analysis of how current housing and demographic data compares to the previous two Housing Production Plans.
3. Rental Assistance – work with the Pettengill House to administer three rental assistance programs funded with CPC funds awarded to AHT in 2021:
 - COVID related rental assistance
 - Rental assistance for existing tenants, non-COVID related
 - Rental assistance (first and last month's rent) for new tenants
4. Collaborate with the City and community interest groups on plans for the redevelopment of the Brown School as affordable rental housing for seniors. Action steps: provide technical assistance on financial feasibility and potential development partners, and help to build support for the initiative; submit an application to the CPC requesting funds to support the redevelopment of the Brown School as affordable rental housing for seniors.
5. Collaborate with the City to assess the local Housing Rehabilitation Program and to identify ways to enhance effectiveness.

6. Collaborate with local developers and property owners which share AHT's mission.

Sullivan said she suggest 9/29/22 as the next meeting date and that she would confirm this date/room with the Trust over email.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.