

## **Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: Monday, October 23, 2023  
Meeting Location: Senior Community Center  
Members in Attendance: Co-Chair Susanne Cameron, Co-Chair Madeline Nash, Karen Weiner, Robert Currier, Mayor Reardon and Andrew Shapiro  
Staff Present: Katelyn Sullivan, Andy Port and Andrew Levine

### Welcome and Public Comment

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT or Trust) Co-Chair Madeline Nash called the meeting to order at 6pm and welcomed Trust members, staff and guests. Nash went over the agenda and asked for public comment. Dylan Thompson provided public comment to the Trust.

### YWCA Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition Introduction

Nash welcomed Judy Tymon who gave an overview of the newly formed YWCA Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition. The Coalition is working with CHAPA's Municipal Engagement Initiative with the goal of bringing together residents, business owners, neighborhood and civic groups, cultural organizations, and other groups and individuals that are active in the community to build coalitions of support for affordable housing production. Tymon invited the Trust members to the first public meeting of the Coalition to be held on 10/25/23 which will include a conversation about creating more housing choice. Nash thanked Tymon for her presentation.

### Housing Production Plan Forum Preparation

Nash reminded the Trust members that the Housing Forum related to the update of the Newburyport Housing Production Plan (HPP) update will be 11/16/23 and hoped that all Trust members could participate. Nash said that the HPP Stakeholder Committee formed by the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) has been meeting regarding the HPP update and the upcoming Housing Forum for the past several months. It is anticipated that sections of the HPP document will be available soon and that the Forum will be the place where important findings of the HPP are introduced. The Forum will include speakers from the City as well as a MVPC presentation followed by breakout tables on topics such as Waterfront West, Accessory Dwelling Units, Community Engagement, Zoning and housing on Municipal/State owned land. The Trust members each commented on which table they would like to be part of during the Forum.

### Brown School RFI & Expressions of Interest Received

Trust members then discussed the [Brown School RFI & Expressions of Interest \(EOIs\) received](#). The Trust members were provided memo summarizing the Brown School RFI process and the four (4) responses ("Expressions of Interest") received in response thereto. Planning Director Andrew Port and Chief of Staff Andrew Levine confirmed that the Planning Office would soon be drafting a Request of Proposals as a next step. Trust members agreed that the number of developer responses was disappointing and cited reasons for that low response rate could have been because of the current restrictive zoning in place limiting the number of units possible at the site, longtime local discord and controversy surrounding the future of the property and developers just not having time to respond to the RFI. Co-Chair Susanne Cameron commented that disposition of the property needs to be the next step and Cameron asked Director Port what he needed from the Trust to move the process along. Port

commented that he would like feedback from the Trust to inform the RFP. Trust members discussed submitting a feedback letter to the mayor. Shapiro made a motion that he would draft a letter to with input from all Trust members and submit to the mayor. Member Karen Weiner seconded the motion. All were in favor.

#### Planning Office Updates

Katelyn Sullivan from the Planning Office provided the Trust with updates regarding Trust program administration and Planning Office initiatives related to affordable housing. Sullivan said that the new HOME PORT program is live. The webpage and application have been updated. A press release and social media posts have been sent out. Co-Chair Cameron has noted that she would like to have a training for local lenders and realtors so they are aware of the program guidelines. Sullivan said that she has had one application so far and the applicant was unqualified due to the amount of assets at time of application. Sullivan also informed the Trust that the Rental Assistance Program is still going strong and that to date, rental assistance stabilization funds have been provided to fourteen (14) Newburyport households (5 older adults, 12 adults and 10 children) totaling \$22,134 in rental assistance. Sullivan updated the Trust that the YWCA has applied for a Community Partners Program grant for a hot water tank replacement. The Trust will be able to partially fund the replacement in the amount of \$10,000.

Sullivan also briefly commented that the Planning Office is working on a new Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance and will be seeking Trust feedback once there is a draft. The Planning Office also received a grant for Storey Avenue zoning and planning assistance. Finally, Sullivan informed the Trust that the application deadline for FY25 Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding is 12/15. The Trust agreed that ideas for the next round of CPA funding should be discussed at the next meeting which would be on 12/7.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.