

Newburyport Affordable Housing Trust Meeting Minutes

<u>Meeting Date:</u>	Thursday, September 17, 2020
<u>Meeting Location:</u>	Online
<u>Members in Attendance:</u>	Judy Tymon, Madeline Nash, Karen Wiener, Susanne Cameron
<u>Staff Present:</u>	Katelyn Sullivan and Andy Port
<u>Members of the public:</u>	Tiffany Nigro, Pettengill House and John Feehan, YWCA

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT or Trust) Chair Judy Tymon called the meeting to order at 7pm and went over the agenda. Chair Tymon introduced Tiffany Nigro from the Pettengill House to give the Trust an update regarding the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Tymon confirmed that the Trust received the second update report dated 9/11/20 from the Pettengill staff.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Tiffany Nigro summarized the most recent report which showed that Pettengill has been able to assist nine households to date including ten adults, one elder and four children. There are also currently 15 applications pending approval which includes 8 new applications since the group last met in August. Several of the applications have been pending for several months due to incomplete applications/paperwork. For example some are missing the complete required bank statement. Tiffany reported to the group that she feels like the program is operating well and that there have been some more exposure with the televised updates from the Mayor, social media blasts, partnerships with Family to Family/ Essex Country Asset Builders social services groups and hard copy cards that went out to local food pantries. Efforts will continue to try and reach those in need anticipating that it is unknown when eviction moratoriums will be lifted. Pettengill is also still encouraging applicants to apply for RAFT funding through Community Teamwork.

There was a brief discussion about the upcoming deadline for the federal eviction moratorium which is at the end of the calendar year and what the future would hold for landlords and families that could be facing eviction. Tiffany let the Trust know that her staff would attend a webinar with DHCD about this subject and how displaced families could be worked into the state shelter system.

Member Madeline Nash asked Tiffany if she was concerned about the families that have long time pending rental assistance applications and wanted to know if the application was too much of a burden to pull together. Tiffany said there are some concerns but each applicant that has not followed through for different reasons is being contacted by staff by follow-up emails and calls trying to understand the situation they are in. Staff tries to remove barriers wherever they can and try to come up with creative solutions.

There was a brief discussion about the total amount of assistance granted to applicants and if there should be thought put into going over the maximum amount of assistance (\$4,500) however it was the sense of the Trust that they be un-biased about the way they are allocating funds but would appreciate being notified of exceptional situations where the maximum amount of assistance has been allocated. It if seems down the line that everyone is hitting the maximum allotment, perhaps the Trust could decide to raise that amount at a future time. Tiffany added that her staff looks at the whole of the situation people are facing and exhaust all avenues. Tiffany said her staff looks at other areas to help and continue to work with other social service partners to come up with creative solutions for example providing food stamps or clothing vouchers so families can focus on paying for their housing. The Trust members appreciate that Pettengill takes a holistic view to helping families. Tiffany added that it was also important to note that she doesn't want people to feel like the help is endless and wants people to feel empowered to help themselves and continue to look for employment if they are able to and get back to work.

Trust members thanked Tiffany for her update and John Feehan, YWCA added that Pettengill is great to work with and Tiffany and her staff have been extremely helpful with his tenants in Salisbury, MA.

YWCA Cottage Court Update

John Feehan, Executive Director of the YWCA provided an update to the Trust regarding the construction of YWCA Cottage Court / Hillside. Construction is back on track with an anticipate start date of October 19, 2020 depending on getting all the permits in place. John mentioned that there have been a few technical setbacks that the Trust was most likely aware of such as HVAC and air circulation challenges. The team is hoping for a 9 month construction timeline.

Member Nash remembered that the tenants will have shared kitchens and wanted to know if there are concerns given the current pandemic. John said that he has been dealing with the health crisis for 6 months at Market Street and there have not been issues so far and it's about taking care of one another and making it a team effort to stay healthy. The current design of the new space will remain as so much time and effort has gone into the currently planned configuration. Nash also wanted to make sure that there has been an update given to DHCD on the status of this project. John said that he had given a recent update to DHCD. John noted that that due to redesigns for the project, there is about a \$300,000 gap in funding and he has applied for grants and will be looking for donations. John noted that this project also received Community Preservation Act funds but may ask for more if needed.

John gave a brief update on his Salisbury project and said that all 42 units are full and have been successful throughout the current public health crisis collecting rent with the help of programs like RAFT but have concerns about the future the longer this crisis persists as many of the tenants are unemployed but John said he looks at creative solutions and works with great partners like the Pettengill House to help his tenants.

Trust members thanked John for his presentation.

VI-C- Number of buildings per lot

Planning Director Andy Port gave an update to the Trust members about the Section VI-C changes that the Planning Board has recently been considering. When someone is looking to add a second dwelling unit to a lot the Planning Board is looking to have the applicant to comply with the new below requirement. The below requirement is still conceptual and will need to be incorporated into a zoning amendment which has not yet been drafted.

- In consideration of the increase in value represented by the granting of a special permit under this Section VI-C, the applicant shall make a financial contribution to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in an amount equal to \$10.00 per square foot of the additional second residential building on the lot, said payment to be made prior to the issuance of a building permit for said second residential building.

Member Nash wanted to know how often this section gets used and where did the \$10.00 come from. Port said that this section is not used often and had even at one point been considered for deletion but that the \$10.00 per square foot number came from two Planning Board members that did some research with other communities. Trust members were agreement that the \$10.00 per square foot of the additional second building on the lot was too low and discussion ensued on the typical size of the second homes that are put on the lot which are usually over 1,500 square feet. Trust members were open to discussing with the Planning Board the appropriate number to have in the zoning amendment but Trust members settled on \$30.00 per square foot and thought that the amount would be an appropriate contribution.

Member Karen Wiener moved to recommend to the Planning Board that \$30.00 per square foot of the additional second residential building be contributed to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Member Susanne Cameron seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Planning Office Updates:

Sullivan gave a brief recap of the Planning Office updates outlined in the staff report including a number of resales and the status of the Bashaw Farm housing lottery and reminded the members that she sent around the RFP for HOME funds. Members discussed the HOME funds but needed more time to consider a type of project to put the funds towards. Sullivan said that she would do some research and that the group could circle back to discuss in October but that it was probably too short of a timeframe to put forth a project. The group decided the next meeting would be on 10/15/20. The meeting adjourned at 7:50.p.m.