

**Westport Affordable Housing Trust  
Virtual Meeting of Oct. 28, 2020**

Participating: Liz Collins (LC), Ann Boxler (AB), Henry Lanier (HL), BettyAnn Mullins (BM), James Sabra (JS); Housing Specialist Leonardi Aray (LA), Recording Clerk Robert Barboza. Absent: Warren Messier, David West.

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. by the Chair (LC) and commenced with the reading of the Governor's order allowing virtual remote participation meetings under the provisions of the Mass. General Laws Ch. 30A, s20f by AB.

1. Minutes: The minutes of the Sept. 23 meeting were reviewed by the Trust; BM made a motion to approve them as submitted, seconded by AB. The roll call vote was 4-0 in favor, with HL, AB, BM and LC voting aye.

2. Meeting Schedule: The calendar of upcoming meetings was set for 4 p.m. on Nov. 18; Dec. 16; and Jan. 17. Trust members were asked to contact the chair if they will be unavailable for any of the scheduled meeting dates.

3. Invoices/Financial Report: LA presented a financial report dated 10/23/20, indicating a balance of available funds of \$1,126,697 before pending expenditures are processed. HL made a motion to accept the financial report, seconded by AB; the motion passed on a 4-0 roll call vote, with JS joining the meeting but unable to vote because of technical issues with his audio. Aye: AB, BM, HL, LC.

BM made a motion to approve the 10/23/20 voucher for invoices including Robert Barboza, \$465.70; Leonardi Aray Architects, \$2,450.00; totaling \$2,915.70. Seconded by AB, the motion passed with a 5-0 roll call vote; Aye: AB, BM, HL, JS, LC.

4. Buzzards Bay Area Habitat for Humanity Information session: LA provided a screen shot of the poster advertising the 6 p.m. information session, and referred to the distributed presentation materials and floor plans to be shown to the public by BBAHFH. LC asked for a straw poll of which Trust members would be taking part or watching the presentation; BM and JS said they could not, HL said he would rather watch the high school re-use committee meeting scheduled for the same time. Discussion moved to what level of community input was being sought by the re-use committee; AB suggested that the Oct. 28 meeting was a response to the need for more public input.

LC advised that the initial study of possible re-use options is available on the town website. LA indicated there was no real consideration of affordable housing development at the site in that assessment; senior housing was only briefly mentioned as a potential option. LC noted that she and the COA director had mentioned the possibility of developing a senior housing facility at the site at several selectmen's meetings, and that she had personally expressed Trust interest in exploring options for affordable housing at the site to High School Re-Use Committee Chair Don Davidson via telephone. AB agreed that the re-use committee and selectmen are already aware that the Trust may have an interest in developing a proposal for the site. LC advised that any Trust proposal to use any or all of the site for affordable housing would take a considerable amount of work. She ended the discussion by encouraging Trust members to participate in the BBAHFH information later in the day.

5. Housing Assistance Office Report: LA reported that an update of the homebuyer assistance grant program known as HOPP (Housing Opportunity Purchase Program) has been approved by the Dept. of Housing and Community Development. He recommended the maximum grant award be maintained at \$175,000, with a maximum home purchase price of \$415,000. He suggested the program be advertised immediately, with a Jan. 12, 2021 deadline for applications. MCO has agreed to serve as the lottery agent for the Trust if a lottery is needed.

LA updated the status of CRE-HAB 1904, applicants with a failed septic system and various health and safety code violations. The septic system repair may be funded by a Board of Health low-interest loan program; bid proposals from local contractors will be sought. CRE-HAB 1903 has re-filed a grant application, seeking \$20,000 for a well replacement project; verification of eligibility continues. LA is seeking approval to move forward with processing of the application; a motion to do so was made by BM and seconded by JS. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor; aye votes from AB, BM, HL, JS, LC.

RAW: LA reported no inquiries about rental assistance in the past month.

SEED: LA indicated there are no current plans to reactivate the SEED program supporting private small scale development. LC noted there is still a need to develop more affordable housing, citing waiting lists of over 400 people for Noquochoke Village, and over 300 people for the Greenwood Terrace apartments.

LAND ACQUISITION: LA noted that \$200,000 in available funds from the Community Preservation Act is earmarked for local initiative land purchases. Another \$300,000 allocated to the SEED program could also be used for land acquisition if needed, he suggested. LA said the Trust should develop a new set of criteria for possible land use before soliciting the public for new purchases; LC asked how the Trust could better monitor properties being offered for sale that could have potential for affordable housing. JS indicated he constantly monitors the real estate market for likely properties.

JS reported that the Montessori School property is still on the market, but the \$1.6 million asking price makes it unfeasible for development of affordable housing. The property is assessed at \$1.7 million, but the Trust should make an offer in the \$1.2 million range to see if the Diocese is interested in negotiating a lower price point, he suggested. He volunteered to talk to the selling broker about purchase options. LC noted that Rep. Schmid has offered to help find funding for affordable housing, and should be asked about potential state support for a purchase; she will discuss the matter with him. LA noted that the Trust has to be in control of the property in order to seek proposals for development; JS suggested it would be easier to send a private buyer to the Diocese's agent to negotiate a sale with Trust support for a purchase. LA said that the Trust should publish its solicitation of land sale proposals from the general public before talking to the Diocese about the property; the chair agreed with that decision.

6. Chapter 61A Parcels: No release requests received this month.

7. CPC Agreement, November CPC Meeting: LA said he would present the annual report to the Community Preservation Committee on the use of Community Preservation Act funds on Nov. 12. A copy of the agreement is at the selectmen's office at Town Hall for members to sign at their convenience.

At 5:15 p.m., JS made a motion to adjourn, seconded by AB; the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote; Aye: AB, BM, HL, JS, LC.

