

**Westport Affordable Housing Trust
Virtual Meeting of Feb. 1, 2023
at Westport Town Hall**

Participants: Vice Chair James Sabra (JS), BettyAnn Mullins (BM), David West (DW), Henry Lanier (HL), Ann Boxler (AB), Craig Dutra (CD). Also present was Interim Housing Specialist Robert Barboza.

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 4:00 p.m. with JS, BM, AB, DW, HL, and CD participating via computer link.

1. POA: The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Vice Chair. The Vice Chair reported his receipt of a letter of resignation from the Trust from Chair Elizabeth Collins, for health reasons. He indicated he would be acting as Chair on a temporary basis, and a volunteer to serve as permanent Chair was needed.

2. Minutes: Nov. 16, 2022 Regular Meeting.

MOTION by BM to accept the minutes of the Nov. Oct. 16, 2022 regular meeting as submitted. Second by AB. The motion passed on a 5-0-1 roll call vote: JS aye, HL aye, AB aye, CD aye, BM aye; DW abstaining as he was not present at that meeting.

3. Meeting Schedule

Future meeting dates were discussed, and it was agreed that virtual meetings would continue at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 22 and Wednesday, March 22.

4. Financial Report/Invoices

JS reviewed the three vouchers from the Interim Housing Specialist for professional services, submitted for ratification having been signed by the Chair: Invoice dated 11/9/22 for \$1,220; invoice dated 12/7/22 for \$1,120; and invoice dated 1/4/23 for \$1,220.

MOTION by BM to ratify the payment of the three vouchers for Robert Barboza invoices. Second by CD. The motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: DW aye, BM aye, CD aye, AB aye, HL aye, JS aye.

The financial report dated 2/1/23 was briefly reviewed by Mr. Barboza, with current deductions of \$1,220 leaving a balance of \$635,768 in Trust accounts as of that date. The report indicates the current balances in all budget line items.

5. HAO Report

Mr. Barboza briefly reviewed the HAO Report dated 1-18-23, stating that the HOPP, CRE-HAB and SEED programs are all suspended, with lapsed application periods, and application forms needing to be updated. He indicated that budget line item transfers would be needed to re-fund the HOPP and CRE-HAB programs because of dwindling balances in those accounts, and noted that the recommended transfers were noted on the Interim Housing Specialist's Trust Action Recommendations list in the meeting package. The proposed transfers to be handled under agenda item #8 after discussion.

After some discussion, several members indicated a desire to have the consulting Housing Specialist from Leonardi Array Architects review the recommendations for re-funding the HOPP, CRE-HAB, and SEED programs, and the budget transfers needed to accomplish that task. JS noted that the SEED account can't be drained of uncommitted funds, as there is an over-55 housing development in the municipal permitting process that may be seeking some financial support for up to nine mandated

affordable housing units. JS said he would contact Mr. Aray to communicate the request for his recommendations on revising the current and FY2024 budget plans, and provide a general update on Trust matters. Mr. Barboza is tasked with providing LAA with the current financial report, list of recommended Trust actions, and proposed budget plan for FY2024 for his review and comment. The general consensus of Trust members was that there would be no action on the budget transfers or recommended actions until input from the consultant was received.

6. Housing Specialist Contract

Mr. Barboza reported that copies of the signed consulting contract with LAA has been distributed to all necessary parties, but noted that delays had made the cited service contract period as ending June 30, 2023. The contract is therefore effective for only the current fiscal year, and would not cover services provided in the next fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2023. The endorsed contract proposal approved by the Trust at the November meeting called for a calendar year of services, extending 12 months into the next fiscal year. Mr. Barboza recommended that the Trust vote to extend the current contract through June 30, 2024, if that term is acceptable to the contractor.

MOTION by BM to seek negotiation of an extension of the consulting services contract with Leonardi Aray Associates to June 30, 2024, with the same cap of \$40,000 per calendar year as the original contract. Second by HL. The motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye, DW aye, AB aye, BM aye, CD aye, JS aye.

7. Habitat for Humanity Update

Mr. Barboza reported a visit to the Sodom Road duplex site on this date, indicating the roof is on and partially sheathed with insulation panels. Exterior walls also partially sheathed, but no doors or windows are installed yet. Progress has been slow due to weeks of extremely rainy and cold conditions. BM noted that Habitat for Humanity is always seeking volunteers to help with weekend construction activities; it was uncertain whether student carpenters from Old Colony Vocational School were still working due to the recent harsh weather conditions.

8. Budget transfers for HOPP and CRE-HAB programs; revise applications & application dates

Mr. Barboza reported the current balances in these two accounts, and the amounts necessary to re-fund the programs for the rest of this fiscal year. After some discussion of potential budget revisions, it was decided to pass over this item until the next meeting, pending receipt of action recommendations from the consulting Housing Specialist.

9. FY 2024 Budget and Action Plan

Trust members discussed options for future funding to supplement the Community Preservation Act funding being requested from Town Meeting each year. Mr. Barboza noted the land acquisition funds are earmarked for that specific purpose, and budget funds are dwindling to the point that further HOPP or CRE-HAB grant awards this fiscal year would severely impair Fiscal Year 2024 programming. Suggestions for potential outside funding sources included investigating state and federal community housing grant opportunities, and potentially seeking community partners to help underwrite affordable housing programs. Action plan discussion included questions about possible dialogue with the Select Board about the high school re-use plan to be placed before voters on the annual election ballot as a referendum question. The Select Board is proposing that the town retain the property, renovate the building for various municipal uses, and finance the re-use effort with borrowed funds; the referendum will be non-binding.

Several Trust members suggested Trust advocacy for an affordable housing component to the re-use plan should be continued; several asked if the Housing Specialist consultant should review, and update

or revise the Trust's submitted options for some affordable housing development on part or all of the campus. DW asked that the consultant be tasked with preparing a comprehensive report on the current state of Westport's housing market, and potential opportunities for improving the affordable housing numbers. DW volunteered to work with the Interim Housing Specialist on a series of press releases raising public awareness of the need for more affordable housing for all segments of the population.

The Vice Chair noted that the resignation in effect on this day creates a vacancy on the Trust, and efforts to recruit a new member should be undertaken. He reminded members that he cannot permanently assume the Chair position due to other personal and professional commitments, and asked that a volunteer step forward at the next meeting to take on that role.

MOTION by AB to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m. Seconded by HL. The motion passed on a 6-0 vote: HL aye, AB aye, BM aye, DW aye, CD aye, JS aye.

Approved Date: 2/22/23