

**Westport Affordable Housing Trust  
Virtual Meeting of Feb. 22, 2023  
at Westport Town Hall**

Participants: Acting Chair James Sabra (JS), BettyAnn Mullins (BM), David West (DW), Henry Lanier (HL). Also present was Interim Housing Specialist Robert Barboza and Housing Consultant Leonardi Aray of LAA. Members Ann Boxler (AB) and Craig Dutra (CD) joined the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Minutes:** Feb. 1, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOTION by BM to approve the minutes as presented. Second by HL. The motion passed on a 4-0 roll vote: HL aye; DW aye; BM aye; JS aye.

**MOTION** by BM to accept the minutes of the Feb. 24, 2021, April 28, 2021, July 28, 2021, and Sept. 22, 2021 Executive Session meeting minutes as submitted. Second by DW. The motion passed on a 4-0 roll call vote: HL aye; DW aye; BM aye; JS aye.

**3. Meeting Schedule**

Future meeting dates were discussed, and it was agreed that virtual meetings would be scheduled at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15 and April 19, 2023.

**4. Re-Organization**

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair were solicited by Acting Chair Jim Sabra. Mr. Sabra agreed to continue as Acting Chair for the time being. Mr. Lanier volunteered to serve as Vice Chair.

**MOTION** by CD to appoint Mr. Sabra as Acting Chair and Mr. Lanier as Vice Chair. Seconded by BM. The motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; DW aye; CD aye; AB aye; BM aye; JS aye.

**5. Financial Report/Invoices**

JS reviewed the voucher from the Interim Housing Specialist for professional services dated 2/17/23 for \$1,040.

**MOTION** by CD to approve payment of the 2/17/23 voucher for Robert Barboza. Second by BM. The motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; DW aye; CD aye; BM aye; AB aye; JS aye.

The financial report dated 2/15/23 was briefly reviewed by Mr. Barboza, with current deductions of \$1,040 leaving a balance of \$633,368 in Trust accounts as of that date. Mr. Lanier commended Mr. Barboza for his efforts developing the budget transfer recommendations and tentative action plan for FY2024 submitted at the last meeting.

**MOTION** by CD to accept the financial report as presented. Second by BM. The motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; DW aye; CD aye; BM aye; AB aye; JS aye.

**6. HAO Report**

The Housing Assistance Office Report dated 2/22/23 was included in the meeting package.

**9. Action Plan Recommendations**

The Chair asked consulting Housing Specialist Leonardi Aray to make some general recommendations on current programs and FY2024 budget plans. Mr. Aray provided an overview of a draft five-year Action Plan, starting with updated (2020) census data indicating small population growth (approx. 800)

but a large increase (approx. 1,200) in housing units to 7,791 units in the past 10 years. He noted that the area's median household income limit has also increased, to approximately \$85,000 now. LA provided slides indicating a need to secure use of an estimated \$360,000 in repaid CDBG loan monies that could be assigned to affordable housing programs and initiatives. He noted a Community Preservation Committee verbal commitment to dedicate up to \$800,000 for land acquisition for another large scale community housing initiative like Noquochoke Village as another potential future funding source. He recommended that HOPP maximum subsidy grant amounts being increased to \$200,000 per housing unit when the program is revived. He envisioned \$700,000 being budgeted for the SEED program over five years, helping to subsidize creation of another 20 affordable units by the private sector.

Overall, the five-year draft plan called for between \$2 million and \$3 million appropriated and spent by the Trust to help create between 37 and 85 new affordable units during that time. LA suggested that for FY 2024, Trust programs could be revived and carefully administered using the \$600,000 or so in unspent funds expected to remain at the end of this fiscal year. Recovered CDBG payments may also be able to support ongoing programs and operations. Mr. West asked how those payback funds could be recovered for Trust use; the Town Accountant will be consulted on the process to be used to recover those funds in the "custody" of the Building Department. LA indicated that the state Dept. of Housing and Community Development would have to approve the re-use of the recovered funds, and Town Meeting would need to approve the transfer to Trust accounts.

Mr. West asked if the Trust could expect some land acquisition expenses to be recovered if land is transferred to a private developer. Mr. Lanier suggested the Trust should try to seek some outside funding from private foundations for local programs and initiatives. It was noted that MassHousing is offering technical support to communities preparing RFPs for land acquisition for affordable housing and related initiatives.

There was some discussion of town plans for redeveloping the former Westport High campus. It was suggested that the Trust initiate a public outreach effort to publicize affordable housing as a suitable use for part or all of the property not preserved as public athletic fields. Mr. West asked for the Trust's endorsement of an effort to get public recognition for the long and dedicated service of retired chair Elizabeth Collins. A request to the Select Board and a possible press release will be explored by the staff.

**MOTION** by DW to pursue official and public recognition of the contributions to community housing efforts made by the former Chair. Second by CD. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: HL aye; DW aye; CD aye; BM aye; JS aye.

## **7. Housing Specialist Contract Extension**

Mr. Barboza noted that the consulting contract recently signed with LAA covered a period as ending June 30, 2023, and the Trust voted at its last meeting to extend the contract to June 30, 2024., with a cap of \$40,000 in payments per calendar year. Mr. Barboza and Mr. Aray were asked to jointly draft an extension document and submit to the Trust for final approval.

## **8. Habitat for Humanity Update: None.**

## **10. Stone Ridge Development Plans**

The Chair reviewed the preliminary plans from developer Richard LeBlanc, builder of Oak Ridge, for 39 units of over-55 condominium units (free-standing and duplex homes) in a new development adjoining the Oak Ridge site. The proposal includes 15 percent (six units) of affordable housing under

town bylaw provisions. The Chair indicated that Mr. LeBlanc would be seeking SEED incentive funding of \$10,000 per unit, and up to \$200,000 in infrastructure support funds for the project. After some discussion, it was generally agreed that the Trust should support the project as proposed.

**MOTION** by BM to advise Mr. LeBlanc that the Trust will entertain an application for SEED funding once Planning Board approval of plans is done. Second by DW. The motion passed on a 3-0-2 roll call vote: HL aye; BM aye; CD aye; DW abstain; JS abstain.

Mr. Aray was asked to update the SEED program application package, to be provided to the interim housing specialist for advertising.

**MOTION** by CD to authorize Mr. Aray to update the application package, and for the HAO to advertise the program after Trust approval. Second by HL. The motion passed on a 3-0-2 roll call vote: HL aye; BM aye; CD aye; DW abstain; JS abstain.

**MOTION** by CD to adjourn the meeting at 5:28 p.m. Seconded by HL. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote: HL aye; BM aye; CD aye; DW aye; JS aye.

Approved Date: 3/15/23