

Westport Affordable Housing Trust Virtual Meeting of Dec. 15, 2021

Members Participating: Chair Liz Collins (LC), Henry Lanier (HL), Jim Sabra (JS), David West (DW), Ann Boxler (AB). Absent: Betty-Ann Mullins (BM). Also present: Housing Specialist Leonardi Aray (LA), recording clerk Robert Barboza.

1. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by the Chair with the above members participating. The Chair commenced the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Minutes: AB made a motion to approve the minutes of the Nov. 17, 2021 regular meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by HL, and passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: AB aye; HL aye; DW aye; JS aye; LC aye.

3. Meeting Schedule: The Chair indicated that upcoming meetings are planned for 4 p.m. on Jan. 26, 2022, and Feb. 23, 2022.

4. Financial Report/Invoices: LA reviewed the financial report dated Dec. 13, 2021, and current expenditures. AB made a motion to approve the financial report dated Dec. 13, 2021. Seconded by JS. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote. AB made a motion to approve the payroll voucher dated 12-15-21 for clerk Robert Barboza for \$539.00 and for Leonardi Aray Associates for \$1,750; total \$2,289.00. Seconded by JS; the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote.

5. BBAHFH Update: Passed over.

6. HAO Report: Passed over.

7. Ch. 61 a Parcels: None.

8. CPA Funding Request: The Chair asked for Trust members to comment on the recent meeting with the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to submit a revised request for Community Preservation Act funding. The revised application requests an additional \$150,000 for studies investigating the possible use of the property for affordable housing; the CPC voted not to recommend the additional \$150,000, re-affirming its previous recommendation to fund \$47,000 for housing office operations and \$200,000 for the land acquisition program. HL said it appears that the CPC thinks the Long Term Building Committee should be investigating the potential re-use of the high school property, and is encouraging that committee to submit an application for a more wide-range re-use study. HL feels the Trust should be given the first opportunity to study the potential for affordable housing there, or at least join in the discussions to ensure that the housing option is seriously considered by the Long Term Building Committee.

LA confirmed that the CPC is suggesting that the Long Term Building Committee be in charge of studying re-use options, and was encouraging a request for CPA funding for that purpose; the CPC suggested that open space and recreation uses be given serious consideration as well as affordable housing. JS believes the Trust should be represented on the Long Term Building Committee so it has a voice in the re-use discussion; he strongly feels that at least a portion of the property be considered for housing purposes. LC said she would like to make clear to the Long Term Building Committee that the Trust would not be proposing to use all or even half of the high school for affordable housing; some

members of that committee thought the Trust was proposing a public housing development like Greenwood Terrace, run by the Westport Housing Authority. LC noted that the Trust wanted to investigate the possibility of using part of the site for a small scale affordable housing proposal coming from a private developer, much like Noquochoke Village.

AB noted that the original “feasibility study” of re-developing the site included affordable housing as one option for further study; she sees no reason why that option would be excluded from further study. She also noted that original study indicated that the Council on Aging might use a portion of the building for a community center. AB said initial feedback was that many residents felt the high cost of retrofitting the building for housing would be prohibitive, and was not a viable option. AB agreed that some CPC members are confusing affordable housing developments by the private sector with public housing developments run by the town. DW supported the idea of a comprehensive study of all possible re-uses for the property by the town; the Trust could then take an active role in encouraging town officials to dedicate some portion of the site to affordable housing.

9. High School Re-Use Plans: Included in discussions of Agenda Item #8.

JS departed the meeting at 5:10 p.m. The Chair decided that Agenda Items #6 and #7 would be passed over, with discussions tabled until the next meeting.

HL made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m. Seconded by DW, the motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote.