

Westport Affordable Housing Trust  
Virtual Meeting of Sept. 29, 2021  
Regular Session Minutes

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

1. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by the Chair with the above members participating. The Chair noted that by order of the Governor, virtual meetings of public boards will be allowed to continue until April.

Executive Session to consider the purchase of real estate. The Chair declared that an open meeting might have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Trust, and asked for a motion to enter executive session under the provisions of Mass. General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21, to consider the potential purchase of real estate. JS made a motion at 4:08 p.m. to enter into executive session for the declared purpose; seconded by HL. The motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; JS aye; BM aye; AB aye; DW aye; LC aye.

DW made a motion to adjourn the executive session and return to open meeting at 4:20 p.m. The motion was seconded by AB and passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; JS aye; BM aye; AB aye; DW aye; LC aye.

2. Minutes: BM made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2021 regular meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by AB, and passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; JS aye; BM aye; AB aye; DW aye; LC aye.

3. Meeting Schedule: After discussion with members, the Chair indicated that upcoming meetings are planned for 4 p.m. on Nov. 17, 2021; Dec. 15, 2021; and Jan. 26, 2022.

4. Financial Report/Invoices: LA reviewed the financial report dated 8/21/21, indicating a balance of \$103,500 budgeted for the HOPP homebuyer program; being sufficient funding for one more home purchase grant before the program will need to be suspended or re-funded. He also noted the CRE-HAB account balance is also dwindling, with much of the current budget committed to pending projects. The bulk of current funding is committed to land acquisition (\$200K) and development costs (\$200K).

HL made a motion to ratify two vouchers previously signed by the Chair: the 9/10/21 voucher for CRE-HAB #1903 payment to American Well & Pump for \$3,100.00 and the 8/25/21 voucher for payment to Buzzards Bay Area Habitat for Humanity for \$195,5000 for the Sodom Road development project; and a new voucher, dated 9/22/21, for staff invoices totaling \$5,307.00. Seconded by BM, the motion passed on a 6-0 roll call vote: HL aye; JS aye; BM aye; AB aye; DW aye; LC aye.

5. BBAHFH Update: LA reported that the Sept. 10 groundbreaking ceremony held by BBAHFH at the Sodom Road lot was well attended, including Trust members LC, BM, and DW, Select Board Chair Shana Shufelt, and CPC Chair Betty Slade. LA said the next step will be well drilling and water tests before a building permit is issued.

6. HAO Report: LA provided copies of the recent Trust presentation to the Community Preservation Committee. The presentation requested funding of \$200,000 for land acquisition and \$47,000 for the operation of the Housing Assistance Office for another year. He suggested that the Trust consider a moderate-income HOPP program, allowing applicants to have higher incomes than the present low-income restrictions; moderate income purchases would not count towards the SHI. DW asked if a moderate-income program would allow the Trust to adopt a local preference policy without DHCD approval; he suggested it would help town employees, and build community support for Trust programs. LA said he would check with DHCD to determine if that was possible, recognizing there is a strong demand for housing affordable to town employees, especially police and fire personnel because of residency requirements. In the past, many police and fire personnel have inquired about the program, but exceeded income limits. LC suggested that a revised program would have to still require an affordable housing restriction be executed.

DW left the meeting at 5 p.m., and AB departed at 5:05 p.m., leaving the Trust without a quorum; the Chair indicated the meeting was adjourned for that reason.

LA continued with the HAO report for informational purposes, noting CRE-HAB #1904 was pending for the submission of contractor bids; CRE-HAB # 1903's project was nearing completion, with an AHR still to be signed. CRE-HAB # 2002 application has been re-submitted, now that the tenant is gone from the residence; CRE-HAB #1901, completed in 2019, will require recovery of the loan/grant as the owner has passed away. Regarding the CRE-HAB program for Fiscal Year 2022, LA suggested that the Trust consider revisions including increasing grant awards up to \$50,000; consider applicants up to 80 percent of area median income; and increase the assessed value limit to \$350,000.

LA also recommended the Trust consider working with the Board of Health to develop a wastewater system repair program for low-income homeowners. Regarding town plans for the vacant junior/senior high school, he outlined a draft letter to the Select Board advising them of the Trust's interest in exploring the use of the site for affordable housing, and asking the Board to consider turning over control of the property to the Trust for that purpose. It was suggested that a Trust member, a Select Board member, and the Town Administrator be appointed to a subcommittee to explore options for development of the school site. For future housing development, it was noted that the Trust has budgeted \$200,000 for land acquisition; another \$200,000 in funding for that purpose is being sought from the CPC.