

WESTON AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 15, 2023, on Zoom

Trustees present: Sarah Like Rhatigan, Susanne Haber, Thomas Timko, Michael Price, Neil Levitt, Thalia Price, Jonathan Schwartz (Assoc. Trustee)

7:10 PM Meeting called to order. Chair read aloud: *Under current state law public bodies may continue holding hybrid and fully remote meetings, without a quorum of the public body physically present, as long as adequate, alternative access is provided. Information about how to join a hybrid or fully remote hearing will be included in the required Open Meeting Law posting.*

Chair asked for public comment, noting that comments re the small grants program would be welcome when the topic was discussed later on in the agenda. No public comments made.

Minutes from April 24, 2023: Tom Timko moved to approve the minutes as submitted, Buzzy Price seconded. Roll call vote approved 6-0-0 (Neil joined later due to technical difficulties).

Discussion of small grants for home repairs:

Recap of previous meeting – Housing Trust had a small grants program for home repairs in 2017 and 2019 with maximum award of \$5,000. Funds came from years of accumulated fees when affordable units in town were sold. Trust is interested in running the program again and plans to ask Select Board for funds.

Following up on questions from previous meeting –

- How to maintain confidentiality? Grants administrator RHSO (Regional Housing Services Office) redacts all names and addresses before sharing applications with Trust.
- Proof of income and residency? Typically RHSO asks for most recent federal tax return and supporting schedules for all household members.
- Are condo special assessments eligible? RHSO says it's a discretionary program so there isn't a specific law that would apply. MassHousing's 40B Monitoring Guide says new roof and windows are allowable improvements if due to deterioration. Three towns running home repair grants through RHSO don't specify if assessments qualify, Acton says units governed by a condo association "would likely not qualify for exterior work if the association is responsible for exterior repairs."

Today's discussion – Focused primarily on

- Pros/cons of eligibility of condo special assessments. General consensus from Trustees was in favor of considering application requests for funds to pay for condo special assessments where those assessments were necessary to complete work that would otherwise be considered eligible for a home repair grant. Discussed fact that we may need to update/amend our previous eligibility criteria. Previously limited grants to work that was deemed necessary for "health and safety." Noted that we may need to expand to cover the concept of

repairs/improvements necessary to maintaining/preventing deterioration of the housing stock, eg., structural, keeping envelope weather tight, etc.. -> Sarah will ask Town Manager to check with Town Counsel to confirm whether any legal restrictions that would prevent us from making grants to pay special assessments or conditions for doing so

- Maximum amount – how to make meaningful contribution to actually getting work done given high costs of labor and supplies while wanting to share funds among as many people as possible -> Christine will research process and legal expense of offering larger amounts as 0% interest loans to be repaid at sale of unit.
- What is eligible for Community Preservation Act funding -> Sarah will follow up to confirm whether CPA funds can be used. From prior inquiry, this program was not CPA eligible.

Public comments –

- Peter Smokowski, President of Dickson Meadows Condo Association – Over time all properties need repairs, especially when getting into the 20-30 year time frame (Dickson Meadows was completed in 2001). Concerned about Weston losing affordable units and sees need for ongoing annual grants.
- Jeanette – Grateful for previous grant to replace her roof at Winter Gardens Condos. Very few other units have new roofs [ED. NOTE: condos completed in 1996]. Sees need for annual grants to help with longevity of the affordable units, which benefits the town as well as the unit owners.
- Tricia McGann – As a 20-year resident of Dickson Meadows thinks a small grants program for affordable units would help with keeping the integrity of the property up.

Habitat project on Wellesley Street:

Brief review of draft contract. In October 2020, Trust approved \$450,000 for project and already granted \$90,000 in pre-development funds to Habitat. For remainder, Trustees were open to Habitat's request for more money at the time of the sale/transfer (\$180,000), with smaller amounts (\$30,000) at sale of each unit, with portion of each payment being paid into the Condo association's account to insure well funded. Formal vote will happen with later contract draft.

Celebrate Weston Day on May 20:

Sarah & Jonathan will volunteer at affordable housing tent in conjunction with other groups. Sarah will bring Habitat fundraising flyer, Village at Silver Hill affordable unit lottery flyer, list of talking points, perhaps something with SKU that leads to fact sheet.

Silver Hill Affordable Unit Lottery:

Affordable unit at 255 Merriam Street (Silver Hill) will be coming on board soon, with lottery coming up in June. Discussed concerns about support for the affordable unit owner.

Warren Ave:

Budget is coming along and Sarah hopes to have it for review at June meeting. Warren Ave managers will be doing their annual inspection in June and wanted to invite one or two Trustees to join them. Most Trustees thought going inside individual units was too intrusive.

Trustee Membership Terms:

Sarah will check with Town Manager about Select Board representative for Trust, hopes all other members will continue volunteering if their term is up in June 2023. Interest in recruiting younger members, perhaps from the fledgling grassroots housing group, perhaps from Celebrate Weston Day.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair:

Tom Timko has continued conversations with Sunrise and has meeting tomorrow at Town Hall to discuss plans for potential 40B there.

Next meeting: Monday, June 12, at 7 pm on Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm