

TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE, MA.  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND COMMITTEE  
VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON MEETING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2023 AT 4PM

**Members in attendance:**

Ranne Warner - Chair, Jan - Vice-chair, Don Eaton, Mark Mills, Patrick White, McCaela Donovan, Lis Wheeler

Non-Members: Johanna Lenski, Cory Ziobro (online) Andrea Lindsay (online), Jim Welch (online), Marissa Mullen (online), Kate Fletcher (online)

**Call to Order**

Approval of the Minutes Mark Mills made the motion, Chair Warner Ranne second. All in favor. Chair Warner reports that the \$125,000 for FY 23 has been placed in the bank. Total account to date \$225,000

**Member White: Residential Inclusionary By-Law**

- was presented to the Select Board based on Lenox By-law. If you are going to build a big development with 10+ units, the developer pays into the AH fund (\$250,000 adds 1-2% of the total cost of the development) for every 10 units. Only for residential. Elm Ct, Wheatleigh, 37 Interlaken ...if developed. The Planning Board may review and recommend changes. Needs majority approval at town meeting.

**ADU By-Law** based on the MA ADU model By-law.

- Requires simple majority vote
- Example: 5,000 sf home. By right an owner can put an ADU up to 900 sf based on the square footage of the house. If the town proposed a by-law allowing greater than 900 sf it would have to pass by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote at town meeting.
- Separate external units need a special permit from the Planning Board. \*Can a pre-existing accessory structure be made into an ADU without a special permit?
- By-Law only applies to full time residential homes.
- Helps residents afford to live here.
- Attempts to make homes more affordable especially for homeowners who need help paying their mortgages.

Kate Fletcher suggested reading what is in the zoning by-laws for ADU's and said the Planning Board will review in the next 65 days.

**Chair Warner's meeting with Eileen Peltier from Berkshire Housing -**

- BH is the largest owner and developer of affordable housing in the county. She explained the whole process to Chair Warner.
- They have a finance department that could help with Pine Woods getting financing
- Preservation of older AH's would be about 3-5M cost. Funds are available. We have already requested funds from the CPC. Believes what we are asking of CPC is remarkable and helpful in getting state funding and Tax Credits (new construction and

preservation). We are looking for preservation funding. Tax credits called 4% for smaller units. It costs between \$200,000-400,000 to get the money. There are sources available to us but many avenues to go through to get them. What needs to be done. What consultants can provide the info and make requests. They are in conversation with Pine Woods about this. Knows Jane Wolfe well.

- Invite Eileen to speak at our next meeting.
- Member Eaton: Berkshire Housing was involved in the housing on Bridge St in GB. CDC owned it while it was being built. 35-37 units there. BH now owns it after the construction. (\$350-\$370K per unit). Also arranged buildings built near Guido's.

**Chair Warner: Review of the Pine Woods Assessment written by Mr O'Connell**

- Estimated cost 3-5 Mil (not a fixed number)
- Matt Kruger(?) The development head of Berkshire Housing reviewed the capital expense report of future costs for PW's and made recommendations.
- Step 1: Life safety issues and the condition of the existing boilers need to be investigated. Cost: \$30,000 to identify the problems.
- Step 2. \$300,000 for emergency repairs.
- Step 3: TBD Do a complete study to go into what needs to be done and the costs.
- Eileen reported to Chair Warner that Construct is the owner and manager, BH would work directly with Construct should they choose to use them.
- Member White: Collaborative board working with Stockbridge Housing Authority, Construct and others. We can try to help to get this done in an ordered fashion that starts with planning. We have information that we need to plan for and figure out what gets done step by step in order not to waste resources. Create an emergency fund for broken boilers, leaking roofs....We are support for PW's.
- Chair Warner feels we should augment with the information gathering stage. She spoke to Tighe and Bond, a structural engineering firm. He is familiar with the PW report.

**PW report suggests:**

- Phase 1) O'Connell recommends in the report to do a survey of structural conditions identifying them as poor, medium, fair or good. Cost: \$18-20,000. We can evaluate the approach from there.
- Phase 2) Get conceptual bids and do drawings of things that need to be identified for Construct to use to get contractors.

**Member Mills** suggested a motion be made to **rescind the prior motion** that passed to request the \$960,000 bond for the purpose of an overall review of new information at Pine Woods (at the last meeting). Member White made a motion to rescind the bond request to the CPC, Don 2nd. All in favor, unanimous vote.

**Member White: Budgets at Pine Woods very tight.**

- Help with funding is necessary. Some help may be needed before coming up with a number.

- Members Wheeler and Warner should be authorized to plan for emergency needs. Make sure funds are necessary as needed.. (They have \$903,000 for the 3 slots; open space and recreation, affordable housing, and historic preservation).
- Ask CPC for a directed grant to us to help issues (ask something under \$300K) CPC can award less. Minimum is 10% to be allocated to each category. Usually about \$41K but with extra funds available this year the minimum would be more than double that.
- Looking at the cost of \$30K for the structure and boiler assessments.
- Why can't we use our funds to do certain maintenance issues? Ie: trees etc...  
\*Ranne will speak with the town council about what can be covered.
- Suggested to make a motion to put in two applications to CPC to further advance the needs assessment and money for an emergency triage fund.
- Member Ackerman posed the question of cost vs new building. Cost of building one new unit is @ \$500K (Andrea Lindsey)

Kate Fletcher (online):

- Member White pointed out the wording of present **ADU by-law** only covers structures built before 1990 as written now. Kate said, PB could change the date.
- **STR By-Law**. Still has problems. Missing middle housing going to outside buyers. She wants to help us strengthen the by-law by collaborating with the Trust. Chair Warner: Best handled at Planning Board level and would like to work collaboratively with the AHTFC. Do this at the Planning Board level first. We will be getting more information with Granicus on Monday during the meeting with them.
- Kate suggested \*reading the diagnostic report by Joel Russell available on town website.
- Resident central district (RC) there is a restriction that is unnecessary. The Zoning Review Committee had it done. Review of zoning by-laws and town representatives to get an idea of what townspeople are thinking. On town website.

Members White and Chair Warner suggested scaling down the proposal to CPC to \$150,000. for deferred maintenance and emergencies.

- **Speakers: Johanna Lenski**, started Pine Woods Community Association (PWCA) to advocate for needs there. And **Marissa Mullen** (tenant with long history there for perspective) and Cory Ziobro (tenant and treasurer of the PWCA)
- Need some engaged non-profit work. Lots of positive things there but there is room for improvement.
- Similar issues are happening in the units. Dryers are burning out. Not sure why. PCA wants to collaboratively work with Construct to get things done. The new maintenance team is good and responsive but there are issues that haven't been resolved. Ie: dryers. It was reported that maintenance feels it isn't a simple solution. Tenants buy their own appliances.
- Marissa Mullen: (PCA tenant member since June 2014) Loves living there but there are a lot of issues that haven't been repaired. On third dryer replacement. Dryer vents go vertically up, and take a 90 degree turn into the attic where the vent is discharged. Attic

is full of lint. (Are vents too long?). Condensation and lint back up in the wall and black mold as a result. Dryer is on an internal wall. Could get a report from Berkshire Appliance or Henry's who have been there.

- PCA feels the dilemma is when the issues are brought up, if they can't fix them, they get placed on the back burner.
- Disabled man with MS is going to need a chair lift eventually but needs a wheelchair ramp soon. May need assistance in the future to get him to the second floor where the bedroom and bathroom are.
- Cory Ziobro suggests there are a lot of design flaws. New staff who have been very attentive since they began. Some of the issues are above their training. When Cory tried to report them, she felt she wasn't heard. Her washing machine had been draining into the wall over the garage causing damage above her car. Would like an assessment of the building design done. List of issues: Driveway built incorrectly, washing machines and drainage, dryer issues, kitchen exhaust are blowing inside possibly causing smoke alarms to go off.
- Chair Warner: Are **fire alarms** up to code?
- Johanna Lenski: Problem with fire alarms. Going off once a week. Electrical issue in central building? Smoke alarms have been checked but unclear if replaced and up to code. If so, what is the cause of the alarms going off?
- Member White: Mike Canales has asked the fire chief and building inspector to review the life safety issues in the report. Make sure all life safety issues are addressed. Dangerous with tenants unplugging their alarms so they can cook without setting off the alarms.
- Kate Fletcher suggested an **energy assessment**. Can MassSave be asked to do this?
- Member Eaton asked about the size of the buildings. 2 units per building. 2 bedrooms in some and there are larger 2-3 bedroom units too.
- Marissa Mullen reports her front door molding is rotting. No insulation in the floor so it is cold. Basic winter costs average: Electric over \$500/mth. Natural Gas \$150/mth.
- Suggestion by Member White: Berkshire Community Action Council is more helpful with energy audits. Covers 100% Must have permission from the landlord to do that. Tenants not aware of any energy improvements that have been made recently. Johanna will ask tenants about this.
- Johanna has asked for black mold assessment.

#### **Johanna - Positive initiatives/suggestions for Pine Woods**

- Community garden improvements. Trying to become a 501c4 to write grants for things like: Need a perimeter fence for the community garden. Cost not known yet. Tree came down on it a few years ago. More raised bed gardens. Greenagers built a few before but more needed..
- New playground space: Falling apart. Reallocation of the garden space could allow more room for children to play and older kids too. O'Brien and Sons in Medway. Build playgrounds. Landscape structures, very durable, lasting 30-40 years. Can see these on the PCA Pine Woods website (<https://pinewoodscommunityassociation.org>). Modern

shapes. Integrate the garden and play structures. Inclusive for physically disabled children, all age groups including adults. Site visit was done two years ago by Andrew Kimball from O'Brien's. They also help find grants for projects. Costs \$150,000-\$300,000 for a well designed inclusive playground. Source of pride for PW's and the town. Others might want to come and use it. CHP has dome playgroups there as well. PW's could be a place that others can aspire to.

- Bus stop needed for children waiting for school bus on a state road. Lots of players will be involved to make it happen.
- Dead and fallen trees have damaged peoples cars. Would like problem trees to be identified. On our immediate list.

#### **Need a long term financing plan for Pine Woods.**

- Member Wheeler made a **motion to apply to CPC for money** for the needs assessment and emergency fund for \$150,000. (Structural Study 20,000, boiler inspection \$10,000, balance would be an emergency fund) These monies would be used with a majority vote of five AHTFC members approval). Member White seconded. All in favor, passes unanimously.

#### **Andrea Lindsay for Heaton Court**

Two things.

- The CPC meeting suggested separate applications. No dire emergencies though boilers are having problems daily. AHTFC will write a letter of support for Heaton Ct to continue work on siding for \$20,000. For every CPC dollar they receive, they get \$2.50 from DHCD.
- Do they want a consultant to identify State and Federal funds for them? Their funding is really just for preservation at this point. Not expansion. Consultant for Section 8 might be beneficial. Board would have to adopt a program for Section 8 money to either help with mortgage or down payment on a home.
- \*How do we get banks on board? There are banks that offer assistance and other Fed funds for down payment assistance. There are 54 Section 8's in Berkshire County and the foster system. Mortgage subsidy for 15 years or down payment. \*Could this be a choice for the tenants?
- Johanna added: Tenants asked to be part of a five year plan, preset by the housing authority. For people with MH issues, physical disabilities it makes it difficult to meet the by-laws of these programs. TBD

#### **Tabled Item #8 till the next meeting.**

#### **Member Ackerman: Housing needs or housing production plan?**

- Leaning toward a housing production plan. Members Donovan and Ackerman have spoken to towns here and in Brewster that updated theirs recently. Take their proposal, modify it for Stockbridge and make a draft from there.

- Committee members should read it and send comments to Jan and McCaela. Michael Canales wants to run it by Donna Brewer for approval. Read and send comments by the end of this week.
- Send to 3 consultants recommended by HD and get results by March 1, 2023. The Trust is the contracting party. The responses would come back to members Donovan and Ackerman, and Mike Canales.
- With a housing production plan there is a lot of interaction with the public, and other boards. We will need someone to reach out to members of the town, someone who knows a lot of people. McCaela can organize some of it.
- Member White mentioned that Governor Maura Healy is requiring municipalities/towns under 10% AH for a plan for a housing production plan. There are 175 towns being asked to do this by tomorrow. So they get up to the required 10%. Info from today's Boston Globe.

#### **Member Mills: Meeting on progress made for Berkshire AHT's to get together**

- Spoke with Mary Beth Mitts from Lenox AHT. Booked and reserved the auditorium at Lenox Town Hall, March 16. 9-2
- Mark sent invitations to Gt Barrington Lenox, Williamstown, Pittsfield. All at various stages but good to make contact and get collaboration going.
- Member Mills made an online request to invite Lieutenant Governor Driscoll to come. She will know what their plans are and what funds might be available. Invitation to Mass Housing Partnership too and possibly Eileen Peltier from Berkshire Housing too.
- \*Can we provide lunch? If we can do it legally. Ask counsel. Maybe Loeb's can cater it reasonably.
- All members of all boards are invited but asked to send at least one. Mark will find out the final count. Maybe add RSVP. 10-25 people expected.

**Next meetings** Feb 13, 4:00, March 6, 4:00 (check room availability)

Member Mills will follow up at next meeting.

Chair Warner will ask Eileen Peltier from Berkshire Housing to speak at the next meeting.

Members Ackerman and Donovan will speak about the mortgage program and housing production. Also updates from towns that only did assessments. As well as banks that help with mortgage assistance and state money for AH purchases. Banks administer the funds. Do we get paid back for our contribution? That's up to each town.

Interesting idea to give a tax deduction to ADU's that are rented year round at an affordable rate. Has to go through the State Senate and be signed by the governor to do so. We will watch Gt Barrington and see what happens.

**Motion to adjourn...** Member White made the motion, Member Mills seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisabeth Wheeler

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Committee and Planning Board Member

A full meeting of the affordable housing trust fund committee can be viewed at [ctsbtv.org](https://ctsbtv.org). Go to "government" in the search bar, type in Stockbridge, then look for the date of the meeting you want to listen to.

