

TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE, MA.
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023 AT 4PM

Members in attendance:

Ranne Warner, Janet Ackerman, Don Eaton, Lis Wheeler, Patrick White, Mark Mills, McCaela Donovan

Also attending,, Mary Beth Mitts, Jane Ralph, Andrea Lindsey (online), Jim Welch (online), John Hart (online)

Call to Order

Approved by Member White, seconded by Member Eaton

Welcome to New Members: Mark Mills and McCaela Donovan

Speaker - Mary Beth Mitts Lenox Selectboard and Chairman of their AHTFC

Lenox Trust established in 2010

- Owner occupied units were rehabbed by a local developer and sold at an underwritten rate.
- Experimenting with AG's abandoned housing initiative. Abandoned or neglected homes are put into Receivership. When rehabilitation is completed a deed restriction for 30 years is placed on the home and then sold at auction. If new owners have to leave in 5 years they can make some money but have to be sold at an affordable housing rate.
- Adams, Lee, Berkshire Bank all are community reinvestment banks. Competitive interest rate. Lenox sold the two for about \$235,000 each. Cost to the town was about \$300,000 and underwrote the rest. Down payment assistance. Up to \$10,000. Bank money @ \$12,000
- Rehab was done by the developer. One house has a new roof, windows (trust covered that). Construct and Habitat put the sale together and made it known. Habitat did marketing. Construct went over qualifications of applicants and took on the lottery.

Block grant. We are members of a coalition which asked for fed funds in 2020.

- We received \$1.2M. We had 5 homeowners originally but 3 were not eligible after Covid. We are going to apply with Lenox, and Lee. Application due in March. Stockbridge Homeowners apply to Lenox Mary Beth. Applicants' names are not public knowledge.
- If we get \$750,000 we need to match with 25% (250,000). We just ask for money, not a certain amount. We need to write a letter of support form to the Selectboard to be part of this application. Do we have a role in the block grant process? We hope CPC will consider paying the 25%

Windshield study: Pick target areas that have more housing that need help (roof, fence, weatherization, furnace, siding, paint...). Lenox will let us know when to do this.

Multi-town opportunities:

- Route 7 (Lavan Center?) Pennrose LLC (check on LinkedIn.) Lenox worked with them to find places to rehab. Schools, mills, brownfields. They create mixed income rentals and manage them afterward. They are committed for 50-60 years. They are doing the project near Marriott. Pennrose has their eye on another property a little farther north. They can rent to MA residents, maybe just Berkshire County. CPC funds were used too.
- DHCD is responsible for assigning Fed and State tax credits: 9% Fed, State 4% asking for \$500,000 from the Trust. With local support you are more likely to get the funding. Total cost 30-31M for the 65 unit project. 5 units per building. Clubhouse. Two story buildings. Circular driveway. Only building visible from the street is the ClubHouse/Management. Parking on the street. DPW, police fire all have approved the project. We should have a group meeting with the other Berkshire Trusts. Meeting on Jan 31 to talk about housing in Berkshire County.
- The Windflower Inn for example is a different kind of housing to consider for seasonal workers. Maybe Lenox Inn which is defunct.

Principal sources of income:

- CPC, the town's general fund and private donors, Cannabis taxes are used elsewhere but we don't have any facilities in Stockbridge. Tax on Airbnb's for AHTF should be required. Suggested higher here, maybe 2.75% more. Must be passed in the legislature. Patrick has started the process. We need to write a letter to support it. Governor has a push for affordable housing so this may be possible.
- Get the 5 Berkshire Trust groups together in late February. Get someone from MA housing partnership (Shelley Goehring) to talk to us about it. We will come up with a few dates and give them to Mary Beth for approval and their Lenox room.
- Jim Welch (Heaton Ct) would like to see more housing to move more kids into town.

Speaker - Jane Ralph, Executive Director of Construct

- Capital finance report handed to AHTFC for Pine Woods (PW)
- Suggestion: Take before and after pics at PW's. Make it an hospitable place with pro-bono and some bono help in landscaping.
- The property may be troubled but 25 residents have moved on to better housing, some continuing their education. Did any buy in Stockbridge? Less than 2% turnover. 1 unit opens every other year. It was built on a flood plain and the water table is rising. Continue to mediate that with the new road. Plant new trees. Pine Woods was the first major project in town.

What are the PW priorities?

- Final 3rd of driveway to be done. Replace the rest of the boilers with more fuel efficient models. 4 boilers were placed already, 24 to go. Since PW was built with CPC money, CPC money can be used for repairs. PW has \$200,000 Pine Woods can't pay for all the staffing. Construct hasn't billed for that yet. Payment for Kathy (manager) and maintenance crew are under Payroll expenses. Can this be bonded like Tuckerman Bridge? Estimated lifetime of a boiler.

- Preventative maintenance plan: Discussion of using CPC money for 15 years to cover the projected cost of PW's projects. Patrick suggested Construct cover about 50K since they cover about 16K per year. This is a great opportunity to reach out to Family Foundations, local donors. PW belongs to National Equity Partners (PW LLC), Pine Woods will become PW Inc a for profit but will not make money on it.
- Deferred maintenance is not in the best interest of the town. Bond maintenance now so it doesn't cost so much later. Most others do this. Without town investment it's harder to apply for state funds. CPC - asking them for 2 things. 4-4.5% to bond. The Trust will go to CPC asking to bond a certain amount of this. We can make a proposal to the Selectboard for ARPA money and general funds as well. 20 year bond for \$50,000 per year = 1M. If they can climb out of these repairs, PW's coffers will grow.
- June Wolfe would be helpful in the CPC process.
- The Coalition for Community Preservation Committees website has a tutorial on bonding. Town has bond counsel as well.
- Look at this proposal with Jane and Construct. May approve up to \$50,000 and raise another \$50,000.

Motion by Mark Mills: I move that the CPC issue 15 year bonds totaling \$962,00 for the capital needs of Pine Woods LLC. Approved unanimously by all committee members.

- This would require Construct to cover \$100,000 for remaining funds needed.
- There may be other ways to raise money but they are not immediate.
- Do we need 45 units? We have 30.
- This is our most important affordable housing project now but we haven't forgotten Heaton Court (next).
- Improve the general appearance of the project. Open garages tend to get messy. When we make it nicer then tenants take better care of their places. Add a more attractive fence around the garden etc....
- More people are behind in rent these days; they are carrying more expenses.

Jan's report on Williamstown's assessment

- Williamstown had a housing assessment report done. Cost \$15K that went through the regional planning board. We need more facts so we should do a housing assessment. Affordable, Senior, handicapped etc... would be good for future projects. Can go to Berkshire Regional Planning Group for funding and they have planners on sight for the study. Check for the study in our emails. Please check other options for the study too. Bring recommendations to the next meeting.
- Speak to Mike Canales and Mary Beth Mitts about their concerns about the BRPB study.
- Housing production plan is more expensive and involves the town. We do have \$50,000 from ARPA for this.
- 2 Step Process? Should a housing assessment be completed first or go ahead and do a housing production plan too. Pro: It would save time, build community support. We may need to reach out to the community to build support. Mortgage deposit program, individual houses for auction....Heaton Court

- A housing production plan would look at possible suggestions of things other than just affordable housing. Making it a conversation about how residents can afford to live here. Looking at broader themes.
- MVP grant added resilient housing study. BSC group did the study. Managed the process and wrote the plan.
- A housing assessment spells out what our housing inventory is right now. Housing production plan will work with developing what the strategy would look like and engage with the community with ideas presented where we discuss the pros and cons with community input. Could we save money by combining the steps?
- How does affordable housing affect us positively and negatively? Future leaders of the town, EMT's, firefighters....
- As a society we need to come to grips with the expense of building. It's a very complex procedure for all the requirements. We could have a bylaw to support affordable housing efforts. Lenox does it.
- Jan and McCaella will look into the larger process. Lenox cost nearly 75K for the large plan. What are the possibilities? Plan with the contractor to do in phases to spread costs.

Discussion: The challenge for Americans is to come up with affordable housing. Many buyers cannot afford a home costing \$500,000. It's out of their reach. How do we help? That's our challenge. Bylaw for developers to pay a certain percent toward affordable housing in town. Real need for workforce housing in Stockbridge (Red Lion Inn and others)

Don: Advocate for Heaton Ct.

Andrea Lindsey and Jim Welch

- Deed search. Corner lot is restricted but will look at the rest of the property to see if it is buildable. Wish list has been sent and will be reviewed at the next meeting. (Parking lots, gutters, boilers in 2 buildings etc...)

Agenda for the 30th

- CPC Application (Patrick and Ranne)
- Mark will work with Mary Beth to get the 5 towns together
- Heaton Ct first next time. They are asking 17-25,000 from the CPC. There is a wish list and they will come up with the prices for the next meeting. Parking lot project, More parking, Lighting upgrade for upper parking lot. Gutter project, windows, boilers in 2 buildings. Money for siding and Ranne's rails this year.

Next meeting:

- Andrea from Heaton Ct
- CDC application (Patrick, Ranne, Lis)
- January 30 at 4:00
- February 13 4:00

Motion to adjourn - Chairperson Warner, Member White - 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://www.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.