

Present

Committee members: Charles Bonenti, Kim Burnham, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Cathy Yamamoto (chair); absent: Bilal Ansari

Attendees with affiliations (not necessarily representing them):

- Jane Allen (select board)
- Rita Farrell (Massachusetts Housing Partnership)
- Peter Fohlin (town manager)
- Charles Fox (Finance Committee?)
- Shamus Heffernan (Higher Ground?)
- David Klausmeyer (Lenox Affordable Housing Committee & Trust)
- Harry Montgomery (Higher Ground)
- Brian O'Grady (Harper Center)
  
- Jamie Galusha (Willinet)

**Business**

1. The minutes of the February 7 meeting were approved.

2.. AHTs in Massachusetts

Rita Farrell presented a slide show explaining the main features of the Affordable Housing Trusts that have been developed using the template provided by the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Statute, Massachusetts General Law, chapter 44, section 55C: Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Their main features include:

- a. full municipal agency status
- b. power to acquire (buy or receive as a bequest) and sell (or transfer) property
- c. power to obtain and hold on to CPA funds, private donations, and other public money
- d. ability to act quickly
- e. ability to employ a staff person

3. AHC/AHT in Lenox

David Klausmeyer of Lenox reported on the experience Lenox has had with establishing an AHT. Lenox approached the issue of affordable housing by pursuing a whole bouquet of small legal steps.

- a. to amend the zoning by-laws to establish inclusionary zoning
- b. to establish an AHT
- c. to fund the AHT incrementally by requesting an annual modest disbursement from the CPA
- d. to referee private efforts
  - 1. Churches in Lenox and Stockbridge took the initiative to investigate feasibility for a large property; the AHT put out a request for proposals,

and the Southern Berkshire Development Corporation won the bid. The AHT developed a four-year (renewable) contract.

2. Someone has offered to donate a lot for building one house. Lenox AHT is doing due diligence on the property.

- e. to promote low cost as well as legally affordable housing
- f. to pursue regional coordination
- g. to obtain peer-to-peer grants
- h. to develop an action plan

## **Resources**

1. Massachusetts Housing Partnership can provide some interim staff assistance and funds if necessary to pursue a property before the town meeting has transferred resources to the AHC.

2. The state Department of Housing and Community Development has peer-to-peer grants.

3. The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and the Berkshire Bank Foundation are hosting an affordable housing symposium in two weeks.

4. Major employers sometimes take independent steps to provide housing or transportation. In Lenox, Canyon Ranch and Shakespeare & Co both developed employee housing on property they owned. Amherst College donated a plot of land, and lent volunteers and its own (buildings and grounds department) employees to help construct a Habitat for Humanity house. Smith College agreed to build a valuable, new low-income housing property in exchange for receiving ownership of a plot of land that had been a privately owned SRO.

## **Tasks**

### 1. Williamstown AHT language.

a. We will present to the CPC at its next meeting the basic language contained in the state AHT statute, letting them know that minor changes would be possible after consultation with the select board. Cathy gives this to Phil McKnight.

b. We will each receive a copy of this basic language, and two other examples of AHTs whose language was modified, to look over before our next meeting and to provide a basis for our working out at that next meeting whether we want to modify the language. Peter Fohlin gives this to Cathy, who distributes it to the committee members.

c. It should be given to the Selectmen at their March 12 meeting, and then again (be finalized) at their March 26 meeting.

### 2. Central message

#### a. Creation

To begin outreach, we need to agree on a single, central message, that includes a discussion of the need (independent of the Spruces), the reasons to establish a

trust, and the reasons to award us CPA funds to investigate sites' feasibility and/or to purchase and develop property. Cathy will draft a core memo on this and Van will develop a short powerpoint presentation consistent with it.

b. Distribution

1. We will start spreading this central message (as well as advocating) through community groups.

Rotary	Cathy
Habitat	Charles
Wild Oats	Cathy
Friends of Library	Charles
Youth Center	Kim
Faculty Club	Cathy
Rural Lands	Van
Clark	Charles
Realtors	Kim

Conservation Comm	Van
Higher Ground	Cathy
Chamber of Comm	Kim
Democratic Town C	Van
Garden Club	Cathy
Banks	Kim
Historical Museum	Van
Harper Center	Cathy
Williams College	Cheryl

2. We will have an affordable housing summit in which we and perhaps other housing organizations present information to the town. This might be held in early April (we will try for April 3) and might be held at the Williams Inn (pending a request); it also might be broadcast live by Willinet.

**Next Meeting: March 5, 2012, 7:00 pm**