

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee (AHC)

February 12, 2013 – March 4, 2013 emails relative to OML Violation Complaint dtd. March 14, 2013

1. *Message from C. Yamamoto to AHC Secretary Cheryl Shanks, including initial draft of Letter to the Editor, which is the basis of the OML violation complaint. Note that the March 5 meeting was postponed to March 12.*

Subject: mission and chairman's opening stmt

Cathy Yamamoto <wmst.housing@gmail.com> Mar 3

to Cheryl

Cheryl -- Thanks and sorry for the back and forth. So we should use that version as our starting point on Tuesday and make whatever minor changes to it we think are needed. Neither Van nor Leigh will be there, so I don't think we should vote on it, though we'd have a quorum.

I'm thinking of the attached as an opening statement -- and also sending to media as a letter to ed. I'd appreciate your thoughts and suggestions.

Also, what do you think the protocol should be for sending a letter to ed? While I don't want to go through "letter writing by committee" (look how long it's taken to get to this point with the Mission Statement), I'd like to have it go out over all our names, but don't feel comfortable speaking for all without some level of committee consent.

Cathy

 Chairman's opening stmt_2013Mar5.doc

Text of attachment: Chairman's opening Statement

The purpose of the Affordable Housing Committee is to increase access to housing that is affordable for those who live or work in Williamstown. In doing so, we hope to increase the town's economic and age diversity, which we believe is essential for the town's future. If we do not reduce the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving these goals, we must consider what Williamstown will become. Evidence points to an increasingly older and wealthier demographic, with young families and singles excluded from residency due to high housing costs.

Williamstown has many amenities: natural beauty, cultural institutions, good schools, and a well-run town government. Towns with these advantages tend to have higher housing costs than towns that lack them. There is, however, another factor at work: Land use. We must face the fact that the decisions we make about land use are an obstacle to keeping housing costs down.

The Town of Williamstown is approximately 47 square miles: 30,000 acres. Currently, 89% of our land is open, that is, in use or in conservation as forests, wetlands, cropland and pasture. That leaves 11% available for residential, commercial and municipal use. It is undeniable that the limited amount of land available for residential use drives up housing costs.

We are fortunate that our town has land that can be used for housing, if we so decide. In working together to address our lack of housing that is affordable, regard for varying points of view and for varying priorities is essential. Positions that preclude compromise benefit no one. We look forward to working together in good faith with all residents of Williamstown to address this.

2. *Email from C. Yamamoto to AHC member Cheryl Shanks.*

Subject: 2nd try

Cathy Yamamoto <wmst.housing@gmail.com> Mar 3

to Cheryl

Cheryl - I've reworked my opening stmt, LtE and would appreciate your thoughts:

Williamstown is becoming increasingly older and wealthier. Young families and singles have limited options for housing that is affordable. Though home prices here have declined somewhat over the last several years, home ownership is still out of reach for many. The Affordable Housing Committee seeks to increase the availability of housing that is affordable for those who live or work in Williamstown. A range of housing options will contribute to the economic and age diversity that is essential for the town's future.

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We look forward to working together with all residents of Williamstown to address our housing needs. Working in good faith, we must be open to varying points of view and varying priorities. Positions that preclude compromise benefit no one. Together we must decide how best to use our resources for the future of Williamstown.

3. *Email from C. Yamamoto to AHC with text of Letter to the Editor.*

Subject: Letter to editor

Date: March 4, 2013

From: wmst housing wmst.housing@gmail.com

To: Bilal, Charles, Cheryl, Leigh, Van

Comrads,

I've been thinking about the conversation that is swirling about and how to jump in. During the past year I've written, I think, two letters to the editor. My feeling is that we should all feel free to write Letters to the Editor or OpEd pieces, if what we write is generally acceptable to the rest of the committee and we give each other a heads up that we have something going out.

So I send this to you now as a heads up. I will send it over my name as an individual not speaking for the committee, though I believe the papers will add "Yamamoto is the chair of the Affordable Housing Committee" or some such. Would appreciate your thoughts on ways to successfully handle this.

I will append your names to this if you wish -- either all or none -- as I wouldn't want to give the impression of a divided committee. **Please let me know by 2:30 PM today if you would like your name added.**

Thank you.

Cathy

Letter:

Williamstown is becoming increasingly older and wealthier. Young families and singles have limited options for rental and owner-occupied housing that is affordable. Though home prices here have declined somewhat over the last several years, home ownership is still out of reach for many. The Affordable Housing Committee seeks to

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4. *Email from C. Yamamoto to media: Berkshire Eagle, iBerkshires, North Adams Transcript, their reporters (Stephen, Edward, Alex), and members of the Affordable Housing Committee (Charles, Cheryl, Leigh, Van, David), Town Manager Peter Fohlin, and Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust, Stan Parese:*

Mar 4

wmst housing <wmst.housing@gmail.com>

to Berkshire, iBerkshires, North, news, Stephen, Edward, Alex, Bilal, Charles, Cheryl, Leigh, Van, David, Peter, Stan

To the Editor:

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Bilal Ansari
 Charles Bonenti
 Van Ellet
 Cheryl Shanks
 Leigh Short
 Catherine Yamamoto

These six people constitute the full membership of the Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee.