**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT FUNDING APPLICATION FY 2024**

**PROJECT NAME:** Community Housing

**SPONSOR ORGANIZATION:** Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust **CPA CATETORY:** Community Housing

**TOTAL PROJECT COST:** $120,000

**CPA FUNDS REQUESTED:** $120,000

**1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Since its creation in 2012, the Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust has established a track record of using its CPA funds to respond nimbly and timely to opportunities and needs that have arisen. Those responses have included:

∙ Supporting the development of Highland Woods and its 40 units of affordable rental housing, some of which became the homes of former residents of The Spruces.

∙ Purchasing three building lots and contracting with Northern Berkshire Habitat to build permanently affordable houses on them. The first is now occupied and the second is underway. ∙ Creating the Richard DeMayo Mortgage Assistance Program which has enabled 21 Williamstown families to obtain their first homes.

∙ Helping fund the Ryan Report which studied housing needs in Williamstown. ∙ Developing programs of rental assistance and mortgage assistance for income-qualified households which have been adversely affected by COVID-19.

In recent years the Community Preservation Committee has recommended unrestricted funding for the Trust which maximizes our flexibility to address emergent needs and embrace unexpected opportunities. We are asking the CPC to continue that pattern of support.

Our request would be applied to some, or all, of the following:

∙ Continued support of the Williamstown Emergency Rental Assistance Program (WERAP) and the Williamstown Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (WEMAP). Both programs are administered by Berkshire Housing Development Corporation.

o WERAP was developed in mid-2020 and has provided 23 grants to aid 18 income qualified Williamstown families hurt financially by the pandemic (a few families have received more than one grant).

o WEMAP was created in 2021 to provide similar help to Williamstown homeowners and has awarded 2 grants so far.

o It is not yet clear what the extent of need will be for these programs in 2023-24 nor the extent to which our grants may be offset by federal and state sources. We believe the need for emergency assistance will accelerate when special federal and state benefits programs and a moratorium on evictions and forbearance on mortgage arrearages end. Beyond the pandemic, the Trust contends there will always be a need for emergency aid to renters and homeowners who fall upon hard times in Williamstown.

∙ Additional DeMayo Mortgage Assistance Program grants to prospective first-time homeowners in Williamstown. The primary impediment to applications is the paucity of housing stock in Williamstown that is within reach of families at or below the Area Median Income. 21 grants have been made to Williamstown residents under this program.

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o Please note that a likely imminent use of funds for the DeMayo Program would be to support potential buyers of the 13 Affordable Housing units in the original Cable Mills project. These units have been rented for the initial 5 years since the project was opened, but now are eligible for purchase, with the application period opening in December 2022. We expect the DeMayo Program will be able to help several prospective buyers, including current tenants, be able to own their own homes.

∙ Possible support of the Habitat Summer Street project. As the Habitat homes are being finalized at the Maple and Cole sites, Habitat has indicated it will be turning its attention to development of the Summer Street lot that the Trust bought several years ago.

∙ Possible support of the Grange property proposal. The Grange project, which would provide five affordable housing units out of a total of 20 units, is still early in its permitting stage. We may use funds to assist the buyers of the affordable units or, possibly, assist in the construction of those units.

∙ Acquisition of property - developed or undeveloped - that would lend itself to affordable housing, likely in collaboration with a developer. This was done on a small scale by the Trust when we acquired building lots and partnered with Habitat. The Town has done it on a larger scale in collaboration with both private and not-for-profit entities (Cable Mills, Church Corners, Highland Woods and 330 Cole). This process might lead to the Trust banking funds for at least a few years to enable a suitable purchase. The Trust might also contract with a specialist to evaluate options for securing and developing property

∙ The Trust is reviewing the updated Housing Needs Assessment completed by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in October 2022. Based upon that review, the Trust may identify supplemental data needed to help focus our programs.

∙ Responding to the unexpected. The Trust has long since realized that unexpected housing-related needs will arise. We hope to be in a position to help meet those needs in a timely way.

The Trust has framed its request in recognition of the prospective financial requirements of the proposed next phase of Cable Mills. Their commitment to adding 27 new affordable rental units is a compelling plan that will represent a major step forward in growing affordable housing in town at a minimal cost to the community.

**2. PROJECT READINESS/FEASIBILITY**

The Trust has more than ten years of experience developing, supporting and implementing a variety of affordable housing initiatives that have added both housing that is affordable in the legal sense and housing that is financially accessible to working families. The Trust also has effective working relationships with a number of not-for-profit and private entities that greatly enhance our reach and effectiveness. We are ready and able to proceed on any and all of the initiatives noted above.

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**3. PROJECT TASKS / IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE**

Throughout FY24, from receipt of funds through June 30, 2024

**4. PROJECT TEAM**

The current members of the Trust are: Daniel Gura, Ruth Harrison, Andy Hogeland, (Chair and representing the Select Board), Robin Malloy, Kayla Servin, Cheryl Shanks and Tom Sheldon.

**5. SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS**

| **SOURCES**  | **$**  | **USES**  | **$** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CPA Funds  | 120,000  | Some or all of the initiatives noted above | 120,000   |
|  **Total** **Sources** | **120,000**  | **Total Uses**  | **120,000** |

**6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**7. CONTACT INFORMATION**

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