

**Town of Lenox
Affordable Housing Trust & Committee
October 18, 2016 Minutes**

The Affordable Housing Trust & Committee officially convened at 4:05 PM

Affordable Housing Trust & Committee Members

Members Present 5

Debbie BurkeDB
Ellen JacobsenEJ
Jackie McNinchJM
Charlene RosenCR
Kate McNulty Vaughan...KMV

Members Absent 2

Mary Beth MittsMBM
Olga WeissOW

Also in Attendance: Gwen Miller (Town Planner)GM
Judy Barrett, Director of Municipal Services, RKG Associates.....JB
Pam Keeper, School System, Planning Committee ...PK
Alesia Warner, Senior Mortgage Originator, Village Mortgage ...AW

Partners in Trust Program & Funding

Additional lenders will now be participating in the federal program supported with Trust funds: including Lee Bank, Adams Community Bank, Pittsfield Coop Bank, and Greylock Federal Credit Union. The Trust Committee has released an additional \$50,000 for the program. Another recipient of trust funds is willing to be interviewed for a newspaper article

PK suggested that the Committee provide a concise description of the Trust program which would be inserted included in the school system's website. GM and EJ will coordinate on this and send a link to PK.

Discussion pro and con on whether the Committee should have a Facebook page. A decision on this issue will be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Village Mortgage Company- Possible Additional Trust Partner

AW presented information on Village Mortgage Company and its willingness to partner with the Town's Trust program. Village is a non-depository financial institution. Therefore, it doesn't hold depositor's funds and lends with its own funds. However, it services loans held by Fannie Mae and sells its mortgages to 10 different investors. The corporate headquarters are in Avon, CT. However, they have been in the Berkshires since 1986, and AW has worked in the Great Barrington office since 2008.

AW presented information on Village's first time home buyers program which has a no down payment option. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Program funds a no down

payment program with an income cap of \$100,000. The Veterans Administration (VA) has a similar program. However, according to JM who has done outreach to generate interest in the VA program there are not many veterans eligible for it. Village expressed interest in partnering with the Town and stated that the grant funds could be used toward closing costs. AW left the meeting after her presentation with the agreement that the Committee would respond in the near future.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of partnering with Village which could not participate in the Federal Home Loan Bank program and its vetting process which the Trust program has been using for its grants. That program's income cap is \$50,000. However, given the median relatively expensive house price in Lenox, there are few houses available for purchase in this program. Should the Committee expand its base, but would Lenox be required to vet the applicants selected by Village? Would any possible vetting requirement subject the town to liability. Would the Committee be serving its primary mission if it provides grants to moderate income families? Members voiced the desire to keep housing purchased with Trust grant funds in the program by obtaining deed restrictions. Although deed restrictions have not been obtained so far, would we be further from this goal if applicants were using more of their own money for the purchase? Several Committee members were opposed to using the higher income limit. However, no vote was taken.

Also, while JM believed that Village probably has sound vetting requirements, she voiced concern that the Trust would be out of money in no time if it utilizes the higher income limits. CR will get together with GM to provide further information on Village participation.

HPP Technical Assistance Update

JB discussed her role as consultant to the Committee preparing the needs analysis of the Committee's new Housing Production Plan (HPP). She has considerable experience as a planner and is currently assisting similar resort type communities on the Cape and the MA Islands. JB has met with knowledgeable parties including: Mary Jo Peretti, Realtor; Allegrone Construction Company, Channing Gibson, Lenox Selectman, Martha Joyner, Lenox Housing Authority Director, Tim Geller, Director of CDC. Members suggested JB also meet with Construct which serves the homeless and is located in Great Barrington, Berkshire Taconic Foundation and an addition Berkshire regional housing organization. She will return to Lenox another time to continue the meetings and will meet with members of the Committee to gain historical perspective.

JB discussed the public meeting process, how to obtain good participation in the two planned public meetings. The Committee recognized the good work GM did to obtain good participation in the recreation committee meeting. She will find a location for the HPP meetings. JB recommended that the Committee make a half hour presentation about affordable housing and the HPP. She recommended that the handout be published in the newspaper. The meeting should be planned for two and one-half hours. A recommendation was made that the Committee pencil in a date for the first public meeting. GM will circulate doodle to develop the date for the first public meeting and the next meeting with JB.

MHP Technical Assistance Update

GM has not yet received any follow-up from MHP concerning ideas to jump start the Sawmill Brook Project.

Minutes of May 10, 2016 Meeting

The Committee decided to delay discussing the minutes until the next meeting. Members voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene Rosen