

ACTON COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION
Minutes Tuesday, October 12, 2021 – online via Zoom

Pursuant to notice given, a Regular Meeting of the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) was held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021 at 4PM via zoom. Present and constituting a Quorum for the purpose of conducting business were regular members Janet Adachi, Andy Richardt, Bernice Baran, and Judy Hodge, and associate members Dan Buckley and Corrina Kreuze. Janet elevated Dan and Corrina to voting members for this meeting.

Dan left the meeting at 5pm.

Lara Plaskon from RHSO serves as ACHC's off-board Clerk and was present for the meeting.

Guests:

- Liz Rust, RHSO; Alissa Nicol, community member; David Martin, Select Board

Janet Adachi, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm. Janet read the updated meeting notice, including guidelines for public participation in the meeting.

- I. **Appointment – Liz Rust, RHSO** – Town of Acton participation in WestMetro Consortium fair housing testing project; Liz provided the following updates on the proposed fair housing testing project:
 - Town of Acton would do the contracting with the City of Newton to participate in the project, but it is otherwise up to the ACHC on how to structure the Town's participation
 - RFP asking for testing organizations to respond to the Consortium's desired project will be going out soon
 - The price of the project is still unclear – depends on the number of tests and other factors
 - 2 types of tests – One type is done for research and produces statistically significant results, but the tests can't be traced back to a particular community, type/size of building, etc.; The other type is called audit testing which is associated with particular communities and will provide Towns the specific information that Towns are seeking
 - Timeline – this is estimated to be a 2 year project
 - Timing for when Acton would know the size of their financial obligation – Liz estimated probably January or February
 - The Consortium is providing \$100K towards the project, and the participating towns will be asked to augment this amount
 - All 13 Towns in the Consortium are participating; 5 RHSO towns are also participants in the WestMetro Consortium and, therefore, participating in this testing project – Acton would be the 6th RHSO community to participate
 - The results of the study will be considered official and could be used for

- reporting to the Select Board, making a plan to address discrimination, etc.
- This type of project has not been done before, so there is not currently a sample of the final product that we could expect to receive; Deliverables/Action Plan still need to be sorted out
- How does testing work? – Trained testers apply for apartments that are listed for rent – different races respond to same ad and results are recorded
- Have there been official complaints filed with MCAD or other entities? Liz doesn't know if there's anything specific from Acton; Boston Foundation did a recent study that showed evidence of discrimination
- Are there any plans to study discrimination in homeownership? This study will be focused on rentals; uncertain if a study will be done on homeownership – homeownership testing is trickier because mortgage pre-approvals are required
- Will testing be focused on large complexes or mix of sizes? Towns will work with the testers/consultants to choose ads to respond to?
- Will there be testing of Town properties – AHA properties, lotteries? This has not been decided, but there are generally different types of advertising for these opportunities – not responding to an ad – so this will have to be considered differently

II. Regular Business

- **Minutes** – The minutes from 9/13/21 and 9/14/21 were read. Judy moved to approve both sets of minutes and Andy seconded. A roll call vote was taken to approve both sets of minutes and the motion passed unanimously.

- **Financial Report**

Andy reported the following in his first report as treasurer:

- Total ACHC assets as of 9/30/21 –\$71,834.51. Transferred \$2,500 to checking account to pay for closing costs for the new owner at 184 Main Street
- No change in other accounts – Balance for undesignated gifts funds is \$298,926.22, and balance of CPA funds is \$135,000.
- Andy will update statements to reflect the addition of new CPA funds – we will now have \$175K in CPA funds
- Janet and Andy have both reviewed the monthly financial statements.
- Corrina moved to approve the financial report and Judy seconded; Lara took a roll call vote and motion passed unanimously.

- **Regional Housing Services Offices Update**

Lara reported the following:

- Lara sent out the annual affordable homeowner monitoring letters
- Lara mentioned a couple of other issues that have been raised to the RHSO – an issue with the condo fee at Anthem Village and the sale of a unit on Brewster Lane. Liz Rust has been in touch with the Planning Department about them.

- **Chair Update**

Janet reported the following:

- 9/22/21 – 100th birthday celebration in honor of Bob Wittlesley (AHA Board chairman and long time member), combined with the exhibit of his daughter's portraits of her father, at Windsor Apartments common room. Nancy Tavernier and Bob Van Meter also attended – there is a nice photo posted on Facebook.
- 9/24/21 – Bob and Janet had coffee with new ACHC Select Board liaison, Fran Arsenault
- DEIC report and recommendations – Select Board discussion during 10/4 meeting – recommendation for creation of incident-reporting system and hiring of full-time diversity officer; numerous audience comments. Board voted to authorize a permanent committee, and extend current committee's authority until approval of charge/mission for permanent committee.
- 10/6/21 – Janet filed annual report online with MA Secretary of State's office

- **Member Reports**

- Bernice – AHA project on Main Street being re-named after Betty McManus

III. New Business

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant to Town** – Discus potential uses and committee recommendations, if any, to Select Board
 - Potential uses that Janet highlighted as related to housing are:
 - Proposed sewer extension to AHA project on Main Street
 - Loan projects for energy efficiency
 - Rehab to produce affordable housing units - yes
 - Emergency rental assistance
 - Bernice offered that AHA would certainly prefer to connect to sewers; Janet invited David Martin to speak on the Select Board's position on sewers – different opinions from different members; Dan asked a question about betterments – David clarified that betterments are generally used to pay off loans that are used to extend sewer; if sewers are extended without loans (ARPA funding used instead), there would be no betterments
 - Bernice raised that there is a parcel of land adjacent to the AHA project on Main Street that will continue to be owned by the Town and the AHA would like to see garden/playground space for tenants' families there – Janet pointed out that the Select Board did support this idea
 - Janet asked if ACHC would like to formally endorse any of the proposed ARPA expenditures – there was a discussion about rental assistance specifically; Corrina moved that Janet draft a memo of support for using ARPA funds for rental assistance and Bernice seconded – Lara took a roll call vote and the motion passed unanimously.

- **CPA funding 2021-2022** – Discuss possible ACHC application
 - Janet brought up the special needs study and the possibility of requesting funds for that – Andy reported they are still working on finding a consultant who could do this type of study.
 - Janet reviewed a bunch of funds that the ACHC has expended in recent months and raised the upcoming expenditure of the fair housing testing; \$440K will soon be expended on Tavernier Place and an additional request for funds from Common Ground may be coming
 - ACHC currently has \$175K in CPA funds
 - Dan gave the opinion to request \$50K of new CPA funds
 - Habitat is planning to ask for financial support from the ACHC – likely to be in the range of \$50K
 - Corinna pointed out that we have put our funds to good use this year
 - Andy voiced concern about being prepared to answer CPC about why ACHC is requesting additional funds if we still have funds remaining
 - Judy voiced that housing is so complicated, controversial, and expensive, it makes sense to ask for \$50K to have on hand to respond to requests for assistance
 - Bernice agreed it makes sense to do a request for funds
 - Janet will put together an application for \$50K – she will have a draft ready in time for ACHC's November meeting

IV. **Old Business**

- **Tavernier Place, 446 Mass Ave.** – the financial closing from the low income tax credit investor took place; Closing for the remaining lender will be 11/5; Town Counsel is drafting the agreement for the \$440K contribution from ACHC; Common Ground would like to meet with ACHC down the road to discuss solar panels
- **Other project updates (if any)** –
 - 26 Carlisle Rd project was approved; 10/4 – Select Board authorized Town Manager to sign the LAU application
 - AHA project – hearing was continued to 10/5 and had low attendance; hearing continued to 11/9 at which time Board is prepared to vote; Conservation Commission is holding a hearing about this project

V. **Future Agenda Items**

- **Member suggestions**
 - Janet would like to return to the discussion about the ACHC grant application documents for capital improvements and closing cost assistance – Janet would like to formalize these application processes
 - Powder Mill Project – Judy asked for an update – Lara mentioned that the Town had reported that the property recently sold. It is still somewhat in limbo.

Corrina moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:32pm and Judy seconded. Lara took a roll call vote – motion passed unanimously.

The next ACHC meeting will be on November 9, 2021

STATEMENT OF DOCUMENTS PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING:

Agenda, October 12, 2021

Minutes from September 13 & September 14, 2021

Financial Reports through 9/30/21

Housing Funds report through 9/30/21

Link to Town of Acton ARPA webpage

Link to Town Manager's memo re: recommendation for ARPA funds

Link to Select Board spreadsheet of potential uses of ARPA funds

Link to FinComm Recommendations for potential uses of ARPA funds

DHCD Approval of 26 Carlisle Rd

Letter to clarify source of ACHC's contribution to Tavernier Place project

2021 ACHC Meeting Schedule, revised

Rehab Trust Slides, 9/13/21

2022 CPA Application Form

2022 CPA Plan as Adopted 9/29/21