

ACTON COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION
Minutes Tuesday, March 12, 2024 – online via Zoom

Pursuant to notice given, a Regular Meeting of the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) was held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 7PM via zoom. Present and constituting a Quorum for the purpose of conducting business were regular members Janet Adachi, Bernice Baran, Judy and associate member Dan Buckley. Janet authorized Dan to be a voting member for this meeting.

In the absence of Lara Plaskon, ACHC's off-board Clerk, Janet took minutes of the meeting.

Guests:

- Kristen Guichard, Acton Planning Director; Fran Arsenault, Select Board liaison to ACHC; Emi Azar, COD liaison to ACHC; Laura Fay, Regina, Dennis, unidentified phone participant

Janet Adachi, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Janet read the updated meeting notice, including guidelines for public participation in the meeting.

- I. **7:00 pm Appointment:** Kristen Guichard, Acton Planning Director, provided an overview of the zoning proposals that will be on the 2024 Acton Town Meeting warrant, including the proposed plan to comply with the new MBTA Communities law (formally known as MGL ch. 40A Section 3A), and also update the 1995 South Acton Village Plan. Ms. Guichard's accompanying slide presentation is [here](#). Other zoning proposals are for a proposed overlay to the Powder Mill District, and relating to vehicle sales on Great Road/2A.
 - **Overview** - Section 3A requires zoning that will allow property owners to build multi-family housing by right; zoning should encompass minimum of 50 acres, which is 1/2 of 1% of total Acton land, with average density of 15 units per acre; 3A does not require any construction; Acton currently does not comply with the allowance of multi-family zoning. Two proposed overlay districts, each with 10% deed-restricted units: one overlay district for smaller-scale multi-family residences, and the second for larger-scale multi-family.
 - **Q&A**
 - Dan: Town is biggest owner in 1/2 mile radius of MBTA station, so why can't some land there be carved out for Section 3A compliance? Answer: Much of land in that area is conservation-restricted or unbuildable wetlands or in flood zone.
 - Dan: Why isn't WR Grace land in overlay? Answer: That area, including 68 Parker Street, received most public opposition, due to concerns about traffic impact, impact on naturally affordable units, environmental concerns, and potential disparate impact (on lower-income, non-white populations).

- Bernice: Concerned about implementation of new zoning, for example, overlay district. Answer: If someone wants to use overlay district, will apply for permit, attend public hearing with staff review and opportunity for public comment.
- Bernice: So building multi-family units is voluntary? Answer: Section 3A is not a building mandate; simply requires that communities have zoning allowing multi-family construction. Acton formerly allowed multi-family but stopped as did other towns.
- Judy: Will Dover Heights existing buildings count toward Section 3A multi-family requirement? Answer (from Bob): No, but the new zoning would allow potentially more units that would count.
- Judy: Powder Mill location is so far from MBTA station. Answer: Can add beyond 50 acres in other locations. Powder Mill site is close to other conveniences such as downtown Maynard, Assabet River Rail Trail.
- Janet: Can Town make changes to the Section 3A plan (with state approval)? Answer: Yes.
- Audience member, Laura Fay: Only 10% of units will be affordable--should Town aim for higher percent? Answer: Section 3A says 10% of units at 80% Area Median Income is the maximum unless community can demonstrate higher percentage at lower AMI would be feasible. Lexington tried doing a study showing that deviating from MA standard would be feasible, but state disapproved. State wants to avoid making a project economically infeasible.

Janet encouraged ACHC members to attend the Planning Board public hearing about all zoning proposals, which will be in 1 week on Tuesday, 3/19/2024, 7:30 pm (hybrid with remote as well as in-person public participation).

II. Regular Business

- **Minutes** – The draft minutes from 2/13/2024 were read. Judy moved to approve the draft, and Bernice seconded – roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.
- **Financial Report**
Dan reported the following:
 - Total bank assets, Cambridge Savings and Middlesex Savings, as of 2/29/2024-\$61,059.45 (net of \$55,019.84, excluding Middlesex CD). Middlesex CD earned interest of \$23.00
 - He and Janet visited Cambridge Savings in Concord on 3/2/2024 to do the necessary paperwork to convert \$40K into four 9-month CDs.
 - Total ACHC Funds (Bank accounts + Gift Funds + CPA Funds) – \$627,685.67 (\$213,539.61 committed and \$414,146.06 available for expenditures)
 - Dan and Janet both affirmed that they reviewed the bank statements/financial report.

- Bob moved to approve the financial report and Judy seconded – roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

- **Regional Housing Services Offices Update**

Janet reported the following from the monthly RHO update meeting involving Liz Rust of RHO, Planning Director Kristen Guichard & Assistant Planners, Kelley Cronin of AHA and Janet:

- 68 Parker: Planning Director recently met with MA Dept of Housing and Livable Communities, fka DHCD and now known as "HLC." HLC had lots of questions, would like to do site-visit.
- 4 Cherry Ridge: Proponents pulled CPA funding application. Currently seeking applicants for the house. Deed restriction requires that owner be disabled vet but has no income restriction; also no provision that would prevent new owner from selling house for a windfall. RHO suggests a compliance certificate to assure that sale complies with the requirement that the owner be disabled vet.
- McManus Manor: Bernice might have more info. Sewer-extension that will serve McManus manor went out to bid in January. That project needs to get underway so that AHA, which expects to go out to bid end of March, can assure investors and others that McManus Manor will have sewer service and be able to get an occupancy permit.
- Powder Mill Apts: Looking for more financial relief. Among costs that project needs to address is AWD fee of 1.2M. AWD historically hasn't waived/discounted fees. Janet is not sure if AWD waived fees for Tavernier Place. Water hookup for Habitat project at 26 Carlisle was 10K and much higher in comparison to other towns' hookup fees, which why ACHC provided grant to replenish funds Habitat spent on water hookup. Executive Director Carolyn Read attended AWD meeting to recommend that Commissioners consider discounted fees for nonprofit developments of affordable housing.

- **Chair Update**

Janet reported the following:

- Habitat: Exploring possible small-scale multi-family project in Acton, involving conversion of existing house into 2 units and addition of another duplex.
- Audubon Hill, deed-restricted owned affordable units: Recent inquiry as to whether deed restrictions still in place and applicable to resale of one affordable unit whose owner recently passed away; resolution involved representatives of owner's family, town assessor, RHO and Janet; original master deed, dated 1990, indicated restrictions still in effect but assessor records indicated that deed restrictions absent from the individual property deed; Janet out of curiosity had done a title search a few years back about the master deed, and had some master deed amendments in her electronic files, including a 1992 amendment that dropped the deed restrictions for the

particular property, which explains why restrictions were not in the individual property deed that Assessor mentioned.

- **Member Reports**

- Bernice: Sen. Eldridge and Rep. Sena met with AHA Board about a proposed bond bill that would authorize more capital funding for state-funded public housing authorities. (Bob added that the bond bill would authorize funding for other affordable-housing purposes.) AHA is interviewing candidates to succeed Kelley Cronin as Executive Director; in-person interviews of finalists will be on 4/2. Kelley will continue part-time after retirement to assist with transition and to work on the McManus Manor project.
- Dan: Would like to look into preserving Audubon Hill deed-restricted units on SHI before restrictions lapse. Perhaps ask RSHO to determine current status and explore options of preserving SHI status.
- Bob: Will be attending National Policy Forum of National Low-Income Housing Coalition in Washington, DC. next week.

III. New Business

- **ACHC Capital Grant Program: Discuss and vote on potential changes in homeowner contribution and other standards with reference to other RSHO communities**

Discussion deferred to April meeting.

- **Affordable Housing Rehabilitation Trust: Discuss Chairman and Vice Chairman meeting and what role, if any, ACHC should have**

- Bob said that some Trust proponents seemed to have adjusted their thinking about the proposal. ACHC needs partners in advocating for affordable housing. Not committing to support, but open to hearing what the group proposes to do.
- Janet: Agrees that ACHC can remain open to further discussions but premature to commit to anything more.
- Dan: Original proposal /numbers not close to being viable. Need to see more.
- Bernice: Take neutral stance for now and if proponents come up with something viable, ACHC can consider.

IV. Old Business

- None

V. Future Agenda Items

- None

Judy moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 pm and Dan seconded. Roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

The next ACHC meeting will be on April 9, 2024 at 7pm via Zoom

STATEMENT OF DOCUMENTS PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING:

Agenda 3/12/24

Draft Minutes 2/13/24

Bank & Housing Funds report through 2/29/24

South Acton Vision and Action Plan: Recommendations - *MBTA Zoning Compliance and updates to the 1995 SAV Plan, 1/23/2024*

Capital Grant Program Changes – Chart about program in RHSO communities; Concord Small Grant Agreement