



BOXBOROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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Meeting Minutes

First draft Feb 27, 2024

Amended minutes approved March 7, 2024

January 11, 2024

9:00 AM

Virtual meeting via zoom

Trustees Present: Les Fox, Chair, Al Murphy, Becky Neville, Kristin Hilberg

Trustees not Present: Ron Vogel (as amended)

Also Present: Alec Wade - Town Planner

Jessi Robinson, Korinne Stephens – Housing Board

Elaine Olmstead – Resident, Tisbury Meadows, Stow Road

The meeting was held virtually with remote participation via Zoom pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 and recorded.

Seeing a number of attendees visible on the Zoom video display, the Chair did a roll call of members to establish the presence of a quorum. Roll call and responses: Al Murphy – present, Becky Neville – present, Kristin Hilberg – present, Les Fox – present.

Noting a quorum present, Chair Fox called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

There were no minutes to review. The last meeting of the Boxborough Affordable Housing Trust (BAHT) was a joint meeting with the Housing Board.

Chair Fox outlined that the main purpose of the meeting was to authorize the Boxborough Housing Board to access and expend \$12,000 of CPA Community Preservation funds appropriated via grant to the BAHT for Regional Housing Services under Article 37 of the May 2023 annual town meeting. Fox stated that although prior town meetings had made similar appropriations for regional housing services contracted by the Housing Board, the Housing Trust had not previously been asked to take such dispositive action. Town Planner Alec Wade is currently assisting the Housing Board with resale of an affordable unit and recommended that the BAHT take action to eliminate any doubt that the Housing Board and the Town Planner are authorized to access these funds to contract Regional Housing Services for support of resale activities and expenses.

Al Murphy, Trustee and member of the Housing Board noted that it is possible there are already sufficient funds available to the Housing Board to contract the necessary services but that the Housing Board cannot determine the balance of funds remaining to it from previous appropriations. He further noted that in the past he as chair of the Housing Board regularly received copies of invoices and expenditures but that this stopped several years ago, and that the accounting and reporting process should be improved and made more transparent. Al and Les both remarked that accountability of funds expenditures from the BAHT has been problematic since at least 2013. Resale of each affordable housing unit is supposed to generate a monitoring services fee to be credited to the Housing Board. There is no visibility into this process. The Chair stated that the “pass-through” funding process for CPA funds for the Housing Board was originally necessitated by miss-alignment of the town’s fiscal year with that of the housing services provider but that this may no longer be the case. The Chair recommended that proper wording of the CPA granting motion might streamline the process. Given the various concerns raised and discussed, Chair Fox made the following motion:

MOVE:

“To authorize the Chair of the Housing Board or their designee to expend up to \$12,000 from the Community Preservation grant for the purposes described in Article 37 of the 2023 Annual Town Meeting, provided that the Housing Board be provided with a copy of each invoice paid as record and notification of such expense; and, that the Town Accountant be asked to establish suitable sub-accounts to track expenditures from the Boxborough Affordable Housing Trust through the Housing Board.”

The motion was seconded by Becky Neville.

The motion was approved on roll call vote: Al Murphy – yea, Becky Neville – yea, Kristin Hilberg – yea, Les Fox – yea.

The Chair summarized the points raised and wrapped up the discussion by with a slide listing several items that should be addressed:

1. Determine whether future warrant article motions appropriating funds for the housing board can be appropriately worded to obviate the need for a “two-step” process.
2. Determine whether the CPA grant process first used in ~2017 is still required or recommended.
 - a. If needed, what specific CPA article motions are needed?
 - b. How can we best track BAHT and CPA funds and spending?
3. H.4565 modified portions of GL Ch44 on municipal trusts with regard to affordability and segregation of CPA funds. It was noted in the Jan 2019 BAHT meeting to seek town counsel advice on this. To date no action has been taken.
4. Work with the Town Administrator and town accountant to achieve a transparent accounting process and ensure proper segregation of funds (e.g., monitoring services fees vs CPA appropriations, etc.)

Select Board and Building Committee Update

At her request, Trustee Hilberg, also Chair of the Select Board and Boxborough Building Committee (BBC), provided a brief update on where matters stood with disposition of the property at 72 Stow Road. The BBC appears to be strongly in favor of recommending the Stow Road property as the site for a new fire station, but no formal vote has yet been taken. They are also waiting to hear the results of a pending action by the Housing Board on acceptable compensation (ie., price) for the land. Al Murphy, member of the Housing Board said that the Board had received an independent appraisal of the land and was scheduled to discuss and vote on the matter at their next meeting on January 18, 2024.

Ms. Hilberg asked if there were any questions regarding the BBC. Elaine Olmstead, Tisbury Meadows, asked if any traffic studies had been done, especially given the recent Enclave development. She expressed concerns for increased noise, truck traffic, and the possible loss of habitat and large copper beech trees. Jessi Robinson (Housing Board) stated that the Housing Board wanted to do proper due diligence for best disposition of the land – monetize and use the proceeds to support affordable housing programs or other purpose. Chair Fox remarked on the difficulties and failed previous attempt to develop affordable housing on such a small scale. He also noted that eventual disposition of the land is not the purview of the BAHT. Our role is to ensure that the property is used for affordable housing as originally intended, or if not, that adequate compensation is returned to the BAHT for other affordable housing purposes.

Adjournment

At 9:57 AM Ms. Neville moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Murphy. APPROVED 4-0.