



## **Town of Harvard Municipal Affordable Housing Trust**

### **Minutes (approved on 3.29.2024)**

**Friday, 3.1.2024, 12 pm via Zoom**

**Members Present:** *Arielle Jennings, Lisa McAteer, Charles Oliver, Angela Chang*

**Others Present:** *Bonnie Heudorfer (prospective member), Paige Johnston (prospective member), Paul Green, Pam Marston, Deebie Kaegbein*

#### **Call Meeting to Order**

**12:10**

- *Chair Arielle Jennings called the open meeting to order remotely at 12:10 pm, pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023, which has suspended the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings at publicly accessible locations and allowing all public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting.*

#### **Public Comment**

**12:12**

- Paul Green from Old Littleton Road shared public comment proposing that the committee turn Bromfield House over to MAHT to become the first town-owned public housing. He also brought up the question about whether CPA funds could be used to acquire Bromfield house and support its maintenance.

#### **Multifamily 3A Zoning**

**12:15**

- The committee discussed the current affordability requirements embedded in the 3A zoning bylaw draft. Currently, a 10% affordable requirement is included already in the bylaw 3A draft.
- There is a debate on the Planning Board about if the bylaw should include a special permit component to incentivise affordable housing and commercial development. For the affordable component the options are:
  - o Option 1 - The development could increase the density from 120 units to a maximum of 225 units. The additional 105 must be 25% affordable. This would total 37 affordable units rather than just 12 if this option was not taken.

- o Option 2 - The development could increase the density from 120 units to a maximum of 225 units. The additional 105 must be 25% affordable and rentals. This would total 37 affordable units rather than just 12 if this option was not taken and also include rental units.
- o MAHT is in support of these two opinions being included. We need further conversation around if one is stronger than the other in our next meeting.
- o Also, it was discussed if we could propose a third option that the whole project of up to 225 units be rental and 25% affordable if the special permit was obtained. It would need to be checked with the state if this was possible because it would affect the initial 120 units.
- o The committee also wondered if there was a property tax advantage for having rental units versus ownership units. Data suggests that fewer renters have school aged kids which might lead to an overall smaller tax burden on the town. 40R is an example of a zoning structure where the state reimburses for costs associated with school-aged children based on the tax burden, but has almost never had to do so because the revenue generated from residential taxes exceed this in most cases.
- o The committee also discussed the possibility of doing a feasibility study to have 20% of the units be required to be affordable. Chales Oliver recently attended an MMA webinar about complying with 3A. You can go to 20% affordable if an analysis shows that it's feasible. State will assess and deny based on the assessment.  
<https://www.mma.org/resource/mbta-communities-municipalities-and-compliance/>
- o The question was brought up if the town has to cover the cost of the feasibility study if this was written in.
  - Next steps:
    - Look to data around rentals vs. ownership in school aged kids in HPP
    - Share feedback with Planning Board about our recommendations for the 3A bylaw and check with technical assistance provider and planning board about ability to do 25% across entire rental
    - Check on funding for feasibility study and if town has to fund this.

## Housing Production Plan

12:40

- EOHLC gave positive feedback about the Housing Production Plan that was submitted in January 2024 and requested the following changes:
  - o Under strategy #4 page 99 the HPP notes the identification of land parcels that may be suitable for affordable development, this section addresses the requirement of municipal sites but does not address specific sites and a timeline for issuance of an RFR/RFP. The EOHLC understands that no suitable municipal sites may be available at this time **but if the HPP could attempt to list some specific sites that would be appreciated.**

- An additional requirement of HPP, is to list specific sites for future 40B development. The HPP does list of sites on pages 98 - 99 but it appears that they are already in development (i.e., the Village at Robin Lane, Emerson Green Village, and Pine Hill Village). EOHLC suggests that **the HPP name some sites for future developments that 40B would be considered for a permitting tool.** Perhaps, Vicksburg square (not sure if part of Vicksburg Square is actually in Harvard) or the new multi-family district (page 98).
- Next steps:
  - o Bonnie H. and MAHT will work with Town Planner to make changes requested

## Vicksburg Square

12:45

- Should MAHT become more involved to discuss the affordable housing component to the proposal or do the bylaws already in place guarantee it?
  - o Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee is currently working with Harvard, Ayer, Shirley, Devens residents (not Mass Development at this time) to craft a resolution for a super town meeting to add housing to existing usage - residential zoning - in Vicksburg Square. Currently the zone is called the Innovation Technology District which is a bit larger than VVicksburg Square, so still defining what they mean by VS.
  - o Vicksburg Square has old Army buildings that would be renovated to turn into housing. 25% affordable is embedded in the plan already as is 25% senior. 2 of the 3 buildings are shared by the Ayer and Harvard parts of Devens. Harvard would have 10-15% of current buildings and units.
  - o Timeline for a decision around Vicksburg Square is likely June or next fall meeting.
  - o There is lots of support from the state legislature to do this soon. Senator Cronan from Ayer already added an amendment in the state budget to rezone, change the reuse plan, and eliminate the housing cap across Devens.
  - o Financing needed to renovate Vicksburg Square would be substantial. Still is an unknown.
  - o Jamie Eldridge's legislative assistant just told us this week that the Governor filed Economic Development legislation eliminating the commercial and residential caps at Devens. This is a separate but related issue to Vicksburg Square.
  - o One member shared that the long term prospect of Harvard retaining jurisdiction of Devens seems low, so we do not want to focus deeply on developing affordable housing in Devens.
- Next steps:
  - Talk to DJFC and Neil Angus about:

- o **What does 25% mean?** 80% AMI or less? Low or moderate income 80-120% or less, at least 10% low income 80% or less, 15% will be 120% AMI or less
- o How many units in the proposed development would fall within Harvard.
- o Could there be an option to buy down additional units? CPA funding usage here?
- MAHT should have a future convo about support for cap elimination

## Other Business - MAHT Membership

12:50

- The select board will approve Bonnie's application to join MAHT in upcoming SB meeting
- Paige Johnston new member interested in applying as well.
  - o Lived in Harvard since 2019, Senior Director of Programs and Impact at Boston Society for Architecture (Housing innovation work, community design projects)
- Because of the growing membership interest in MAHT, we discussed and agreed upon the idea to amend MAHT's [charter](#) to include 6 members and have an associate member as well.
  - o "3.1 There shall be a board of trustees, (the "Trustees"), which shall be comprised of ~~five~~ **six members and one Associate Member who may have the authority of a full member in the case that a quorum needs to be met.** Trustees shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Trustees shall serve for terms of two years. The terms of the trustees shall be staggered so that as nearly one-half as may be shall be appointed annually. There shall be no limit on the number of terms that a trustee may serve. The Trustees shall receive no compensation for serving as a trustee of the Trust."

## Bromfield House

1:00

- Currently the town is planning on selling the Bromfield House in June. After one member of MAHT spoke with Mass Housing and the Worcester Community Housing Resources, Inc. we learned there may be an option the town could explore to turn Bromfield House into affordable housing. We agreed to send the town a letter supporting the extension of the lease for the families at Bromfield House for two years so options like this one could be explored. MAHT.
  - Next steps:
    - Write a letter to Town/SB about extending the lease at Bromfield House and using this time to explore affordable housing options.
    - Testify at SB meeting on Tuesday

- Follow-up with Worcester Community Housing Resources, Inc. to continue learning about possibilities.

- **Adjourn 1:22**