

ACTON COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION
Minutes Tuesday, November 8, 2022 – online via Zoom

Pursuant to notice given, a Regular Meeting of the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) was held on Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at 4PM via zoom. Present and constituting a Quorum for the purpose of conducting business were regular members Janet Adachi, Andy Richardt, Bernice Baran, Bob VanMeter, Judy Hodge, and associate member Dan Buckley. Janet designated Dan as a voting member for today's meeting.

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

Judy joined the meeting at 4:13pm. Bob left the meeting about 6:20pm

Guests:

- Steve Joncas and Rachelly Bartolotta from Common Ground; Community members – Nancy Corcoran, Anne Forbes, Terra Friedrichs, Judy Kronwasser, Alissa Nicol, Dan Stouch, Ariel Wright, Lou York, Jane (no last name provided); David Martin & Fran Arsenault, Select Board

Janet Adachi, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm. Janet read the updated meeting notice, including guidelines for public participation in the meeting.

I. **4pm Appointment:** Steve Joncas, Common Ground

- Status Update on Tavernier Place & Request for additional funding – Project has faced 2 major obstacles – 1) more ledge on the site than anticipated – additional costs to remove; 2) Effects of Covid on supply chain is delaying completion. Difficulty in getting Eversource transformer will delay putting building into operation from end of 2022 to March 2023, and will generate more interest payments. If transformer showed up today, they would be ready to go; electrical will be in this week.
 - Common Ground had hoped to complete project by the end of this year, but now looking like it may be March – this leads to additional interest payments and other financial implications
 - Total of all change orders = \$830K in approved change orders and additional \$190,000 in unapproved change orders so total of \$1,020,000
 - 370K additional costs, including to maintain building, due to transformer delay
 - They are strategizing on how to cover these additional costs. Have been talking with all lenders.
 - Dan asked about contingency – 500K (5%); 107K soft cost for Acton Water District service already paid so available for use.
 - Steve will provide ACHC with a list of all of the different costs that have resulted from the delays – they will push back on some of the costs that they are being charged; he will send pro forma to ACHC tomorrow
 - Bernice asked what happens to the people who applied during the delays –

Peabody Properties has list of those eligible and will continue to keep people informed about the move-in dates; there were over 400 applicants, so there are many people waiting if some of the original lottery winners aren't able to wait

- At Bob's request, Rachelly shared document with current information about budget, additional costs, financing.
- Common Ground proposing to defer 200K of developer fees, reducing to 400K; increase MHP mortgage to cover additional 235K in debt; hoping to get 600K from DHCD, which is a lot less than what other developers are seeking; and 100K from ACHC.
- Bernice asked – is there a new cost per unit estimate given the additional costs? – about an additional \$35K/unit (1M/31) so new total per unit will be around \$520K. Rachelly said original per-unit cost 492K.
- Janet explained that ACHC has been spending down a lot of its funds lately, so wants to carefully consider Common Ground's request
- Andy asked if 100K from ACHC would suffice to secure 600K from DHCD; and what would happen if project ended up with excess, unneeded funds. Steve explained that if costs are less than anticipated, any excess will go first to DHCD which makes the largest financial commitment, and then to ACHC.
- Dan said increase in total development cost for Tavernier Place wasn't as bad as for the Main Street project. Steve said a lot of the cost is due to DHCD standards, such as having all units adaptable, etc.
- Common Ground still considering solar panels.
- Q&A continued on the details of the financing and costs with additional questions from ACHC members
- Janet asked how soon Common Ground needs ACHC's commitment – would be great to get conditional commitment tonight, but they could wait until as long as December
- Dan moved that ACHC provide a conditional commitment of \$100,000, and Bob seconded (final decision to be made in December after ACHC members have more time to review new costs and see if there are any changes) – Lara took a roll call vote and the motion passed unanimously
- Comment from Bob – Common Ground is part of CTI (Community Teamwork in Lowell); Acton is currently part of SMOC catchment area, and Bob suggested that Acton would be better served by CTI
- Overview of potential small-scale 40B at 457 Mass Ave – consists of 2 lots – one lot is 27,000 sq ft (currently vacant) and the other is 40,000 sq ft (currently small 2 bd house)
 - Proposal to build twelve 3-bd individual homes – 1,400-1500 sq ft – 3 affordable ownership units, and 9 market units. One unit would be existing antique house, 1800s. Would move detached garage to create one-way looping driveway. Market: younger families in Acton or moving to Acton. 25% at 80% AMI.
 - Common Ground has parcel under agreement
 - Common Ground would be ready to make a more formal presentation at

- ACHC's December meeting
- Comment from Terra Friedrichs from Mass Ave – encouraged ACHC to push for homes for lower income households

II. Regular Business

- **Minutes of October 11, 2022** – Bernice moved to approve the minutes of the October 11th ACHC meeting and Judy seconded – Lara took a roll call vote and the motion passed unanimously

- **Monthly Financial Reports through 10/31/22**

Andy reported the following:

- Submitted all documents to the Town for the audit
- Only change in assets was interest earned
- Total ACHC assets as of 10/31/22 – \$69,371.01
- Balance for undesignated gifts funds is \$244,126.22. (excludes \$7,500 earmarked for monitoring or RHSO)
- Total all funds available for expenditures (checking account + gift funds + CPA) = \$532,595.31 - \$200K of which has been approved to go to McManus Manor and \$100K which has just been conditionally approved for Tavernier Place
- Janet and Andy affirmed that they have both reviewed the monthly financial statements.
- Dan asked if Andy can do some analysis of ACHC's spending over the years – discussion followed about how ACHC can contribute more funds to affordable homeownership
- Judy moved to accept financial report and Bob seconded – roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

- **Regional Housing Services Offices Update** – update postponed until next month due to full agenda

- **Chair Update** –

- Janet still attending webinar series about the new MBTA Communities legislation;
- Janet also attended a webinar for owners of multi-family units about how to make units greener
- Select Board approved request to use \$200K for McManus Manor
- Janet cancelled room reservation for Room #9
- Janet will start working on 2022 annual report

- **Member Updates** –

- Bernice shared that State has approved funds for the sewer extension to McManus Manor – Mass Works grant

III. New Business

- **Community Preservation Act, 2022 (FY '23) funding application** – Discuss & approve proposed ACHC application (deadline: 11/14/22)
 - Janet reviewed that ACHC has been spending down its non-CPA funds which is why we still have CPA available; We are now in a position where we have very little non-CPA funds, so we need to replenish
 - Dan suggested that ACHC request \$200K instead of \$150K because ACHC has been spending so much lately – brief discussion followed
 - Bob moved to approve application for \$200K in CPA funds and Andy seconded – Roll call vote was taken and the motion pass unanimously

IV. Old Business

- **Conceptual affordable housing proposal for W.R. Grace North** property – Continue to discuss 10/11/22 presentation; authorize Chairman follow-up with proponents about ACHC discussion, including additional ACHC feedback/requests
 - Janet shared a list of the key features in W.R. Grace's proposal as well as the issues that came up at last month's meeting
 - Bob asked if there's a status report from environmental authorities re: suitability of the site for human habitation – yes, Janet reviewed the information that is available
 - Bob would like to know if there are transportation improvements that could be made – shuttles to train station, pedestrian improvements – Janet replied that this was discussed last month
 - Janet reviewed issue of sewer betterments on Grace property with reference to 2009 settlement agreement between the Town and W.R. Grace – Grace originally obligated for \$3.5 million in fees – Town agreed to reduction in fees, which reduced the associated sewer betterments proportionally, with most of remaining betterments now on South parcel, south of RR tracks-- proposed redevelopment is on North parcel; Town is aware of this issue and will work through it with Grace
 - Bernice asked if this project fell within MBTA communities legislation - no.
 - Bernice asked if proposed affordable units could be lower than 80% AMI. Lara said affordable units at Avalon Acton were 20% at 50% AMI.
 - Dan (as abutter) would like to see a sidewalk on River Street going to Parker Street.
 - Dan noted that toxic plume has been mitigated somewhat; suggested that ACHC request mitigation funds like the 500K in mitigation received from the Mews.
 - Andy pointed out that the follow up letter from WR Grace (listed in Statement of Documents) stated that units would satisfy initiative to develop near the train tracks.
 - Andy also advocated for 50% AMI units; Dan wondered if more 50% AMI units would be to the detriment of the Parker Street development which is already offering units to that AMI level
 - Janet suggested sending a letter stating that ACHC is generally supportive, but that includes a list of issues that need further clarification and then invite

W.R. Grace and developer to come back early in the new year

- Janet will touch base with Town Manager to see what is going on with the wastewater management issue
- Judy suggested asking for more information about how developer would balance concern for the environment with development; also asked for more information on linking to the rail trails
- Comments from community members –
 - Alissa advocates pushing for units targeted at lower AMI; also concerned about traffic
 - Jane from Parker Street – question about safe harbor; question about Acton's Comprehensive Permit plan; question about a cap on the number of units – none that we're aware of; concerns for developer – doesn't believe it's walkable to the train, sidewalks must be added for safety, doesn't see any connections to the bike paths – is developer creating these?; believes there are better ideas for this property; concerns about putting family housing near a train line
 - Terra Friedrichs – suggested the Town buy the parcel and preserve it as green space; ensure that there are walking trails accessible to the public; suggested that ACHC members who are abutters shouldn't comment on pricing – Dan clarified that he abuts the South parcel, not the North parcel where development is proposed – he will abstain from voting, but will continue to comment. Janet noted that participating in discussion was Dan's decision to make and she valued his perspective, didn't have an issue with his participation.
 - Ariel Wright – suggests looking at topography map showing lots of hills; concern about tall building atop hill, traffic on River Street, safety of train crossing.
 - Dan Stouch – concerns about hills, valleys, vernal pools, nature, and wildlife; ecological impact; what elevation would development be – barrier between development and train?; concern about water runoff if built on a hill; concern about safety around the train
- Janet will organize all the comments received and send them to W.R. Grace

- **Fair Housing Testing**

- WestMETRO Consortium will be contracting with Suffolk Law to do a fair housing study; Acton isn't in the Consortium, so we would have to tack ourselves on if we want to be part of the study; ACHC had previously agreed to be the contact if the project goes forward
- Bernice asked what role of ACHC would be as contact for project – details are still to be determined; Bernice is concerned about capacity of ACHC to be the contact; Bernice is not sure if there's a need for this project in Acton
- Dan wants to see more details about the project
- Janet stated that the Town is interested in investigating whether zoning is excluding certain populations

V. **Future Agenda Items**

- To be determined

Bernice moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:59pm and Judy seconded. Lara took a roll call vote – motion passed unanimously.

The next ACHC meeting will be on December 13, 2022, 4pm via Zoom

STATEMENT OF DOCUMENTS PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING:

Agenda, November 8, 2022

Financial Reports through 10/31/22, including bank account and housing gift funds

Draft Minutes from October 11, 2022 meeting

Draft CPA Application & Exhibit 1 letter re: ACHC's projected CPA funding needs

Documents related to W.R. Grace Re-Use Proposal

- Letter from W.R.G. to follow up from October ACHC meeting
- Email from Toll Brothers to follow up from October ACHC meeting
- Introductory Powerpoint Presentation
- Toll Brothers Powerpoint Presentation
- EPA Letter re: Site Re-use, 10/4/22
- Link to youtube video of EPA Public Info session re: W.R. Grace on youtube
- Link to Green Acton webpage re: W.R. Grace property

Memo to Select Board re: proposed funding for Main Street, 10/25/22