



Town of Danvers

Danvers Affordable Housing Trust

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Gardner S. Trask III, Chair
Carla King, Vice Chair
Christen Tipert, Clerk
John W. Alden
Maureen Bernard
Stacey Bernson
Anne Casale-Skinner

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 PM with Trask, Tipert, Alden, Bernsen present. Members Casale-Skinner and Bernard were absent. Land Use and Community Services Director Aaron Henry provided staff support.

1. Approval of Past Minutes

Alden approved to accept the January 18, 2023, meeting minutes with amendment; Bernson seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. New Business

The Chair amended the order of the agenda, allowing Attorney Nancy McCann and Ramie Schneider of Winn Development to present the Zoning Board of Appeals filing for the following proposed project.

- [New England Homes for the Deaf – Proposed Development](#)

Attorney Nancy McCann of McCann & McCann and Ramie Schneider, Senior Project Director at Winn Development, were present to discuss the application, filed last week, for a special permit and variance at the New England Homes for the Deaf, 154 Water Street under Section 30.2.F of the Zoning Bylaw.

McCann shared with the Trust some history of the property. It was started in 1925 at its current location on Water Street through the works of Helen Keller and is one of the oldest facilities of its type in the country. Currently it is a campus of 16 plus acres of land that includes a senior low-income component of twenty-five (25) units located in the Thompson House, the building visible from Water Street. It is independent housing for seniors and currently has a waiting list of 3-5 years. Located in the back of the campus is a nursing home that provides skilled nursing services for the deaf and deaf/blind community. The proposed project is an expansion on the New Homes for the Deaf campus of independent units for seniors of low to moderate income. The Danvers Zoning Bylaw under Section 30 allows for a special permit low to moderate income housing for seniors through either the Danvers Housing Authority or through a developer selected by the Danvers Housing Authority of which New England Home for the Deaf and Winn Development were selected.

The Illustrative Site Plan, Sheet Number A-1.0, dated February 7, 2023 was presented to the Trust. It featured the proposed building of 140 units for seniors 55 and over. The units are a mix of 16 studio units, 84 one-bedroom units and 42 two-bedrooms units. There are some unusual features that impact the layout within the 16 acre site, unbuildable areas include a 200 foot wide National Grid utility easement with high poles and high-tension wires, the riverfront area and a wetland which has been

delineated with Conservation Commission. With these challenges, Weston & Sampson laid out the development of the site. A unique feature is the proposal of a new curb cut on Water Street which will be the safest and most direct access to the new proposed development. Parking will be provided adjacent to the building. The site will include walking trails, providing safe access to amenities and services throughout the campus. There will also be the addition of a sensory garden.

The Zoning Bylaw allows for this use by special permit if it is senior housing for low to moderate income. The residency preference will be all seniors, but preference for those who are deaf, deaf/blind, or near deaf. The Danvers Housing Authority has requested, and developer has agreed, that when these preferences are filled, then preference is to Danvers seniors.

The affordable component is going to be tiered, ranging from 80% AMI down to 30% AMI. The developer is proposing that 50% of the units will be in that affordable range, from 30-80% AMI. Of that 50%, DHCD requirement criteria is that 13% of those will be at 30% AMI. For clarification the 13% of the 15% is 9 affordable units. The rest of the units will be market rate. Schneider told the Trust that Winn has a team who manages the affirmative fair marketing. And Winn will remain as a partner with the New England Home for the Deaf. All 140 units will be placed on the DCDSHI.

There is an incline on the back portion of the property which will be brought down and graded.

All the requirements of the special permit have been met, requesting a variance due to the height of the proposed building which is 49 feet. The applicant is also requesting a variance to allow for a couple of parking spaces in the lot line setback area and the limits to the number of units in a building to 8 and only 2 stories.

The applicant will appear before the Zoning Board of Appeals on March 13, 2023. Winn Development held a community meeting with the neighborhood, about 40 residents attended, on January 31st and the project was well received. The current design is the result of feedback from those at the meeting. The original plan contained parking which was closer to Jacob's Landing. The building has been turned so that the parking is further from Jacob's Landing. Screening will also be included in the landscaping, separating the campus from these residents.

The applicant was also required to complete an application with the Planning Board, scheduled to be heard on February 28, 2023. But it is the Zoning Board of Appeals who issues the special permit, variances, and site plan review.

The developer has come before the Trust seeking a letter of support to present to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Comments and questions raised by the Trust were as follows:

Alden asked about lowering the topography and how the parking area, such as lights and noise, will affect those residents of Jacob's Landing. McCann responded that because the building, parking and campus will still be higher than those living on Jacobs Landing, this should not be a concern. The developer will also soften these concerns through landscaping and plantings.

The Chair asked if there will be a relationship with Danvers Housing Authority's backlog. McCann responded that the first precedence is for deaf, deaf/blind or near deaf. But in the event Winn can't fill any more units with these preferences, then it will go to Danvers residents who are 55 years of age or older. All units will accommodate the deaf, deaf/blind and near deaf but also designing for market rate units. Veterans are not a preference at this point.

Chair inquired what the market rate of the remaining 50% will be. Schneider was unable to provide and answer and will get back to the Trust. And of course, the market rate will change.

Winn Development will be going to the State pool for funding. This will require having a permit in hand because the State requires that the project has been approved and is able to break ground. The goal is to apply for the October 2023 pre-application and then be invited to the January 2024 full application. The applicant would then apply for the building permit in the middle of next year, 2024, and project would begin once this is received. Some of the other funding Winn will be applying for are DHCD soft subsidies and the North Shore Home Consumption. Because DHCD looks for matching funds from the Town validating their support of the project, Winn is also seeking funds from the Trust.

The Chair asked if there is any nearby transportation that may add funding from the former Governors plan for affordable housing near transit. This may not qualify because it is an overlay zoning district which would require a Town Meeting process, but there is public transportation near the campus.

Some residents were concerned about the amount of traffic this project may bring to an already high traffic area. But there is a lower number of cars for this defined population. There was a full traffic study and parking analysis submitted with the application. Under this unique section of the Zoning Bylaw, it is required that the developer provide adequate parking, but not the required standard two spaces per unit no matter the size of the unit. The proposal is one to one which is more than needed and will also provide new parking spaces for the existing New England Home for the Deaf staff.

Bernson asked what is the period of affordability? McCann stated 25% of the units will be in perpetuity and the balance of the 50% will be for 40 years.

The Trust requested from the developer that a plaque recognizing their donation be installed on the property which developer agreed to.

The Chair plans on attending the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting in March.

Alden makes motion to offer a letter of support; Bernsen seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Developer will have a later conversation with the Trust to confirm the amount they are willing to donated toward this project.

3. Finance Report

- Review & Acceptance of Financial Report

Henry stated that by this time next month, this should be the highest account balance.

Alden makes motion to accept the January 31, 2023 financial report; King seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. New Business

- Community Preservation Act Discussion

Cathy Ellsworth, Town Clerk, has officially certified all the signatures. King submitted more signatures to pass along to Ellsworth.

Staff has been asked to come up with a list of projects that might have been CPA eligible. Staff is working on this for one who is associated with this initiative. This is on target for the May 2023 election.

The Chair stated that this Board would benefit from the CPA because the recipients of these funds to engage in more partnerships with Habitat for Humanity or others had the Trust had the CPA funds.

Henry mentioned that looking at the draft list, housing may be a hard sell. The estimate is a million dollars a year, \$100,000 to housing at minimum. Because this money will accumulate quickly, the Trust will have to consider how to spend these funds. Alden states that in the past, the Trust was reluctant to spend the money because they never knew how it would be replenished.

By 2024 they will be above 10% and have the ability of how to be more helpful. The Chair states that if they have the income, without draining the pool, there will be opportunities for affordable housing that do not have to be on the SHI. Loan programs, subsidies are a few options. CPA funds are available 80-100% but most communities don't go there due to the lack of SHI credit. And CPA funds are not tied to brick and mortar.

King is seeking residents to place signs in front of their homes. There is also an email list CPA for Danvers at Google groups and Facebook page is also CPA for Danvers. In support, please either like the Facebook page or King can add you to the email list.

The Trust initially thought that the Board could donate funds to education, but the Trust does not call out the ability to do so and Town Counsel confirmed that they can't. The Trust should consider adding this in the future.

Henry suggested the Trust consider some options to relieve the tax payers, such as for the Swamp Walk or Rail Trail. And if this is going to be adopted, then the Board must have the correct information. A turf field can't be purchased with CPA funds, but if there is CPA funding available then there is more money freed up in the funds.

Some ideas for the CPA funding could be for replacing the columns at the library, Town Hall renovation, or the Food Panty renovation.

- [Housing Production Plan](#)

Henry told the Trust that the Housing Production Plan is done but must be issued.

- [Trust Member Comments](#)

The question was asked if there were any updates on open seats on the Affordable Housing Trust. Henry told the Trust that the Town Manager's office is sending out communication, requesting applicants for vacancies on all Town Boards. Lisa Silva, who skill set is in the mortgage industry, submitted a talent pool application yesterday morning.

Alden asked Henry about the 45 Dayton Street project. There are two parcels which are being flipped as a housing proposal. They will be going before the Zoning Board of Appeals requesting a variance because residential is not allowed on the highway quarter. This will trigger the Inclusionary Bylaw. Henry will distribute the formal Zoning Board of Appeals application filing to the Trust.

The question was asked if a subdivision is being built, once at five single family homes don't count for the units. Henry responded that any coordinated development plan going forward, as of November 2019, whether it is subdivision, ANRs or a proposal do count. This cumulative.

The Chair mentioned that this Trust has existed for 10 years.

- [Open Projects](#)

Nothing new on open projects. It has been a quiet couple of weeks.

The new Planning Director, Brian Szekely, has expertise in Affordable Housing. Aaron has been meeting with him in the hopes of gaining more staff assistance.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

The Chair recommended moving the April 19th meeting because this lands on school vacation week. The next meeting is scheduled for March 15th.