

# Minutes of Manchester Affordable Housing Trust Joint with MHA

## APPROVED

Date: September 29, 2021

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting through Zoom as posted

Present: MAHT: Muffin Driscoll, John Feuerbach, Peggy Hegarty-Steck, Joan McDonald, Chris Olney  
Gretchen Wood, Technical Support Staff: Sue Brown

Absent: Sarah Mellish

MHA: Gretchen Wood, Elaine Persons, Beth Heisey, Executive Director: Irene Frontiero

### I. Call to Order

John called the MAHT Meeting to order at 6:06. And noted the MHA would call their meeting to order when they had a Quorum.

### II. Presentation and Discussion of CIMAH Warrant Articles for Fall Town Meeting

John provided context of the discussion, noting that the MHA and MAHT had requested two non-binding articles for the Fall Town Meeting: the first to gauge support for using the Pleasant Street DPW site to support redevelopment and expansion of affordable units at MHA sites; the second to gauge support for forgoing payment for the site, as without a free or nearly fee site for new housing that would support the MHA site redevelopment, the project would not be economically viable.

John noted concern for CIMAH articles that limit development to 50 units and year and to require a second means of egress for multi-family developments with access roads in excess of 500 feet, as they could impact the proposed redevelopment of the MHA sites.

John also shared that the Town through a BOS letter to DHCD highlights how the Town is trying to support affordable housing. (The letter to be discussed later)

Considering the efforts the Town is taking members shared that the CIMAH warrant articles are sending a mixed message. The MHA and MAHT are asking the town to be supportive of affordable housing and regulations that allow and encourage it, while the CIMAH articles are meant to restrict development of the type the MHA and MAHT are supporting.

CIMAH member Jay Bothwick assured the Trust and MHA Board that CIMAH supports MHA and MAHTs efforts to redevelop the MHA sites.

He noted that the article to require two access roads was a matter of public safety. He stated that the request to restrict housing in town to 50 units per year was meant to avoid additional demand on municipal services, stating the town has limited resources and housing creates a significant demand on schools, public safety and other municipal services. He said historically the Town averages around 7 new housing units a year so 50 a year is a generous amount to allow.

Mr. Bothwick said CIMAH didn't anticipate the articles would impact redevelopment of the MHA and DPW sites since they would consider these as separate projects – with none exceeding 50 units on their own and thus they could be developed over different years.

Chris responded that the proposed warrant articles are an attempt to stop the 40B, but that they are too late to impact the SLV project which has already submitted an application to the ZBA and further, 40B projects are not bound by local zoning regulations so zoning articles are ineffective tools against 40B projects.

Chris asserted that the need for a second access road should be determined by the permitting authority (PB or ZBA) in plan review and should be dependent on the site and whether a second road is needed to respond to a specific public safety hazard.

Members agreed that there could be unintended consequences of requiring a second access road including the loss of open space, greater impacts to natural resources, and an increase in impervious surfaces.

Mr. Bothwick noted that CIMAH would be open to looking at ways to make the articles consistent with MAHT goals.

Mr. Bothwick acknowledged that 40B's are not bound by local zoning, but felt that such regulations could be presented as evidence of local intent/need on an appeal of a 40B decision.

Chris further noted that the 50 unit restriction would mean that some or all of the average of seven single family home couldn't be built if 45-50 units of affordable housing were already permitted in a single year. This could create further hostility toward multi-family housing of the type the Trust is supporting.

He further noted that Zoning regulations already give the permitting boards the tools they need to limit housing including a restriction of no more than four units in a single building and said the Board is looking to reduce rather than increase restrictions to allow for a diversity of housing to meet local needs. John also voiced concern that the articles were looking to restrict housing while the MAHT is looking to support housing.

Gretchen Wood noted that NIMBYism (Not in My Back Yard syndrome) is counter to what the MAHT and MHA are trying to do – create affordable community housing within existing neighborhoods.

Mr. Denny Hall reported that a number of towns have regulation regarding length of roadways and second means of egress, noting Easton for example allows 1200 feet and limits the number of homes on such a road to seven. He also said that CIMAH was waiting for a report from Bay Side Engineering regarding the need for secondary access roads to housing developments.

Members asked if CIMAH had vetted articles with Fire and Police, noting that the Fire Chief had testified that in his professional opinion the SLV project with one two-way access road presented no fire safety hazard. CIMAH replied they did not have further input from the Fire Chief.

**The Housing Authority opened its meeting at 6:26.**

John suggested a MAHT member work with CIMAH to see if the articles could be changed to overcome MAHT objections.

### **III. Update on BOS Non-binding Vote re Use of DPW Site to Support MHA Redevelopment**

John and Muffin reported that they had worked with the Town Moderator to finalize the proposed warrant language for the two non-binding articles regarding using the DPW site to support MHA redevelopment and they had presented the articles to the Select Board for approval.

They noted that the BOS would be discussing warrant articles at the October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting and would likely finalize the Town Meeting Warrant by October 18<sup>th</sup>.

Several members of the public asked questions and offered comments about redevelopment of the DPW and MHA sites.

- Should the town lower the cost for the Developer without any assurance that the units would be affordable or that the profit would be limited. John answered that this would be negotiated as part of the transaction and that it would be part of the overall development plan.
- Will any of the units at the DPW site be affordable or will they all be market rate? Sue responded that while the financial feasibility study modeled its analysis with no affordable units on the DPW site in order to maximize income to support the MHA units, it would be up to the Developer to determine if any or how many affordable units would ultimately be proposed.

### **IV. Discussion of proposed letter regarding SHI criteria to DHCD**

Chris provided an overview of the request by CIMAH for the BOS to send a letter to DHCD to request a change in criteria for allowing units with existing income qualified residents to be counted on a town's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). Under current requirements a unit must be marketed and leased through a Fair Housing Marketing Plan in order to be eligible to be listed on the SHI.

Chris noted that while the initial request was for a waiver for the units at Powder House Lane, Jody Morse adapted the proposed letter, taking into consideration comments from members of the Select Board, Town Planner, CIMAH and NSCDC so now the letter is an appeal for a change in policy going forward to incentivize communities to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing. The Board of Select want the MAHT's input before sending the letter.

Chris further noted that while this would unlikely result in Powder House Lane units being added to the SHI in time to create 'safe harbor' and stop the SLV project, it may provide an incentive for future projects.

After a brief discussion of the intent, tone and content of the letter, the Board authorized Chris Olney to finalize changes to the letter to DHCD drafted by Jody Morse for consideration by the BOS at its Oct 4th meeting.

### **V. Update on MAHT MHA Housing Project Survey**

John tabled the discussion of the neighborhood surveys until the next meeting so that Sue Brown could provide a status report.

**The Housing Authority adjourned its meeting at 7:06**

### **VI. Discussion of Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program**

Peggy introduced Cheryl De Primio who manages the program at Action, Inc. Through this program rental/mortgage assistance is provided to Manchester residents experiencing job loss or loss of income due to CVOID. The major points of the report include:

- Action has committed \$103,780 to Manchester residents for rental assistance.
- Manchester was the first community in the region to create a COVID emergency rental assistance fund, which has served as a model for others.
- Average assistance is \$5,766 per household.
- 18 HH have received assistance. 16 renters and 2 homeowners who needed mortgage payment assistance.

The Fund expires on September 30. There is a balance of \$46,220 in the fund. Chris Olney moved and Muffin seconded that the Fund be extended to Dec 31, 2021. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

Action will send to MAHT recommendations to increase the scope of financial assistance to include other housing related costs (i.e. moving, security deposits) which would further the goals of the program.

#### **VII. Discussion with Jody Morse regarding 33-35 Union Street**

John introduced Jody Morse who discussed her concept to create formal affordable housing units at the property located at 33/35 Union Street. The building contains 7 units. It has been renovated, but other improvements would be helpful. Tenants have incomes at the 50% and 60% AMI level. Jody expressed frustration at not having the technical assistance needed to navigate all the programs and regulations that might help her convert the units to affordable but is hopeful that a combination of HOME and MAHT funds could provide the financing to make this work. She proposed that 4 units become rent restricted as a first step.

However, Jody made it clear that participation is contingent on having the units placed on the SHI without having to evict the current tenants. Irene Frontiero mentioned the state Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) as an example of financial assistance to property owners with vouchers for tenants.

The Board expressed support for the concept presented by Jody and agreed to hold off on next steps until the DHCD has responded to the SHI letter.

#### **VIII. Administrative**

- a. **Minutes:** Trustees approved Minutes of August 26, 2021 as submitted.
- b. **Treasurers Report:** Joan presented treasure's report. No significant changes in finances. Waiting for CPC to transfer \$200 K to MAHT. Muffin moved and Joan seconded that John be authorized to sign the grant agreement and any amendments to it. Joan further reminded Board the applications for CPC funding for next year are due in December.

#### **IX. Discussion of Planning Efforts as may be relevant**

After brief discussion about the program to convert unrestricted unit to affordable units, providing technical assistance, and promoting a regional approach, the Board decided to ask Sue Brown to contact CHAPA and MHP and other organizations to see what resources might be available.

- X. **Other matters, as may not have been reasonably anticipated by the Chair (Discussion only)** None
  
- XI. **Next Meeting Date and Adjourn:** Next meeting was scheduled for Oct 28 at 6 PM.  
Adjourned at 8:20 PM

Meeting minutes submitted by Sue Brown

Meeting minutes approved at MAHT meeting of October 28, 2021