

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

Pursuant to notice given, a Regular Meeting of the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) was held on Tuesday, March 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, Judy Hodge, Bob VanMeter, and associate member Dan Buckley. Janet designated Dan as a voting member for today's meeting. Judy joined at 4:50pm.

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

Guests:

- Lou Levine – attorney for Parker Street, Todd Wilson- Parker Street management; Alissa Nicol, Nancy Corcoran, Terra Friedrichs (via phone) – community members; 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. Regular Business

- **Minutes** – The minutes from 2/8/22 were read– Andy moved to approve minutes and Bernice seconded – a roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

• **Financial Report**

Andy reported the following:

- Added a line to note that \$60K was earmarked, but check hasn't cleared yet; Otherwise – no changes from last month other than interest earned
- Total ACHC assets as of 2/28/22 –\$69,323.76
- Balance for undesignated gifts funds is \$238,926.22. (excludes \$7,500 earmarked for monitoring or RHSO)
- Total all funds available for expenditures (checking account + gift funds + CPA) = \$477,348.06
- Janet and Andy affirmed that they have both reviewed the monthly financial statements.
- Bob moved to accept financial report and Andy seconded – roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

• **Regional Housing Services Offices Update**

Lara reported the following:

- Lara is working on a revised application for the ACHC capital improvement program – draft will be ready to review at next meeting
- Janet asked question about annual income recertification of affordable homeowners – Lara clarified that this is not required. Homeowners only need

to be income eligible at the time of purchase.

- Chair Update – none
- Member Reports - none

II. New Business

- Tenant-advocate proposal – Bob seeking endorsement of the resolution (see resolution in documents presented at this meeting) and presented the following:
 - Housing and Climate Justice for Acton group is requesting that Town create a tenant advocate position to assist tenants
 - SMOC receives funds to do this kind of work, but they are not serving Acton's tenants adequately; Laura Ducharme (Town social worker) does not have time to provide this support
 - 25% of Acton's residents live in multi-family housing and most of those are renters
 - Resolution doesn't pre-judge where the capacity for this position would come from

A discussion/comments from ACHC followed:

- Bernice – has many reservations about Town hiring someone to advocate for a group; doesn't feel it's in the scope of ACHC to support this – not related to providing an increase in affordable housing; Town has already established a page of their website and it should be monitored for several months to evaluate the activity from tenants
 - Bob believes that it is part of ACHC's mission to support making Acton an affordable community – it's just as important to help people stay in the homes they have as it is to create new units
- Dan – believes this is mission creep; MetroWest Legal Services is another organization that can provide assistance to tenants – will likely need someone with legal expertise to work with tenants
 - Bob responded that legal services organizations are only able to serve very low income households, so not enough to meet needs of Acton's tenants
- Janet – wondering if all tenants are low-income – there are high rent units in Acton too; other resources are already available; tenant concerns will likely involve legal issues so legal assistance is really what's needed; if SMOC is already receiving resources to provide this assistance, then follow up should be done to ensure that they are doing so; Town has many other financial obligations and Janet doesn't feel this is a top priority given the resources that are already available
- Andy – wants to be supportive of tenants having a voice, but believes this role should be in the private sector (United Way, etc.)
- Judy doesn't see the harm in looking into this – tenants do have needs and it

seems worthwhile to explore this

- Janet emphasized that ACHC's endorsements hold a lot of weight and she wants to ensure that all members are in agreement before providing an endorsement.
- Dan – fully supports gathering information on tenant needs, but the need hasn't been quantified so far, so the expense doesn't feel justified
- Terra Friedrichs (community member) – group is asking for a study; there are tenants needs and Town should provide support; believes this issue should go before Town Meeting
- Bob's responses – other staff in Town that support specific groups – Council on Aging, Veterans, so wouldn't be a departure; ACHC has a role in supporting inclusive rental housing, so this proposal is in keeping with ACHC's mission
- Nancy Corcoran – we don't have enough information to support this proposal yet; there are just a few vocal members in the community advocating for this; thinks we should take a step back and gather more information
- Janet – in the end, this proposal is about hiring a staff person – this should be backed by information that substantiates the need
- Bob moved that ACHC support the resolution, and Judy seconded – 2 members voted in favor, and 4 members opposed – motion failed
- Janet offered that ACHC can re-visit the issue when there is more information

- **68 Parker Street** (this was discussed as the first agenda item) – Lou Levine and Todd Wilson were present to speak for 68 Parker Street; Janet drafted a memo of conditional support of the proposal to waive sewer connection fees for 68 Parker Street in exchange for deed restrictions on units there. Discussion followed –
 - Andy's concerns from the last meeting were resolved in Janet's memo
 - Bernice expressed concern that the square footage of units would impact whether units could be added to the SHI
 - Lou Levine's comments
 - 10-20 unit vacancies per year – 30-40% turnover per year
 - 68 Parker ownership is willing to meet all of the conditions necessary to get units on the SHI
 - Sequence – Sewer commissioners would have to agree that sewer fee could be waived if units can be added to the SHI, then LIP application would be submitted to DHCD – if approved, sewer connection would move forward and units would be added to SHI as vacancies arose; if DHCD does not approve adding units, sewer connection won't happen
 - Some discussion about the requirements of fair housing marketing
 - Bob moved to approve Janet's draft memo which provides ACHC's conditional endorsement of proposal and Bernice seconded – the motion

passed unanimously

- Alissa Nicol – asked questions – why didn’t 68 Parker ownership plan for septic replacement? Why is this proposal good for the Town since the rents are already naturally affordable?
 - Todd replied that constant upgrades have been made, but they feel sewer connection is better long term; Rents are currently affordable to households at 40% AMI – they won’t increase the rents just because the targeted AMI under the restriction is 80% or below; the restriction provides protection against inflation in the future
 - Bob offered that the Town is getting a time commitment of affordability – protects the units from losing affordability if the development is sold.
- **Community Preservation Act Surcharge** – Select Board requesting comments on possible ballot initiative to increase CPA surcharge on property taxes; Janet will provide comments from ACHC if there is consensus among the committee members. Janet provided an introduction to the topic and discussion followed:
 - State is providing much lower matching funds than they used to, so the pool of funds is decreasing
 - Surcharge is currently 1.5% - some support for increasing to 2% or more, could be as high as 3%
 - Bob – supportive of increasing surcharge to 3% to make more resources available for affordable housing with only a modest impact on homeowners
 - Bernice – most people who spoke at the Select Board about this issue spoke in support of open space, not affordable housing; If ACHC gives a memo to the Select Board, it should specify ACHC support specifically for using increase for affordable housing
 - Dan – property taxes have gone up quite a bit – this automatically raises the CPA revenue since it’s a percentage of the higher property taxes
 - Andy – in support of some increase in surcharge – not sure on amount
 - Judy – supportive of an increase in surcharge
 - David Martin – taxes went up 2.34% last year, and will go up 2.5% next year
 - Alissa Nicol – taxes are limited in the amount they can increase
 - Terra Friedrichs – supports affordable housing, but only through rehab – doesn’t support new building
 - Janet has concerns about the long term effects of a higher CPA surcharge and about the Town’s increasing budget; 187 municipalities participate in CPA – 75 charge the maximum 3%
 - Bob moved that ACHC submit comments to Select Board in support of increasing surcharge an undefined amount, Bernice seconded - 1 no, 1 abstention, 4 members supported – motion passed, so Janet will draft comments

III. Old Business

- **26 Carlisle Rd** – Janet will work with Town Counsel to come up with a better process for providing grants; check has not yet been sent due to Janet's concerns - she will drop off check as soon as paperwork is done
- **Tavernier Place** – 3/25 at noon will be a groundbreaking ceremony at Tavernier Place and to honor Nancy Tavernier; Will include, AHA, and other invitees; Janet would like to hear from ACHC member re: anecdotes about Nancy to share at the ceremony
- **Fair Housing** – ACHC had wanted to tack on to the WestMetro HOME Consortium's testing study, but there were no responses to Consortium's RFP, so project is on hold; Acton now has more time to think about how to get involved in the study or if we want to do so
- **Annual Report** – Janet submitted ACHC's annual report early, in advance of deadline

IV. Future Agenda Items

- Janet would like to meet in person in Room 9 next month – she will check in with ACHC members in advance to see if everyone is willing/able to meet in person
- **ACHC program forms, guidelines** – update

Bob moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:11pm and Andy seconded. Lara took a roll call vote – motion passed unanimously.

The next ACHC meeting will be on April 10, 2022, 4pm, Room 9 or via Zoom

STATEMENT OF DOCUMENTS PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING:

Agenda, March 8, 2022

Draft Minutes from February 8, 2022

Financial Reports through 2/28/22, including bank account and housing gift funds

Memo from RHSO re: 68 Parker Street

Memo from ACHC to Select Board to communicate conditional support of 68 Parker Street proposal

Memo (3/4/22) from Bob Van Meter to ACHC re: Proposal for ACHC to support a tenant advocate for Acton

Proposed resolution in support of a tenant advocate/coordinator

Bob Van Meter Powerpoint re: Why Acton needs a tenant advocate/liaison

Memo from Town Manager to Select Board re: proposal for tenant advocate, 1/18/22

Resources for Renter page from Town website, 1/28/22