

**Sturbridge Affordable Housing Trust
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 21, 2023**

Present:

Diane Trapasso
Margaret Darling
Wally Hersee
Ed Goodwin
Jamie Goodwin
Kathy Neal
Jean Bubon, Town Planner
Robin Grimm, Town Administrator
Jeneé Lacy, Administrative Assistant



APPROVED

Absent:

Bob Lucier

J. Bubon called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes of February 28, 2023

Motion: To approve the minutes of February 28, 2023 as written.

By: J. Goodwin

2nd: D. Trapasso

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

Brief overview of the Housing Production Plan and review and discussion of the Plan Goals and Strategies

J. Bubon stated that she has supplied everyone with the current goals and that she would like to go through each one and the committee can decide what should be kept and what can be changed or deleted.

Goal 1: Build local capacity and advocacy efforts to achieve housing production goals.

- 1.1 Continue to conduct ongoing community outreach and education on housing issues and activities (ongoing)
 - a. Consensus to keep goal.
- 1.2 Investigate securing a dedicated Affordable Housing Coordinator (Med. 1-5 years)
 - a. J. Bubon recommended leaving this goal at 1 to 5 years.
 - b. E. Goodwin asked for clarification on this goal. J. Bubon stated that CMRPC is creating a coordinator position that would cover four communities.

- c. K. Neal stated that it is very common for small communities to share Planners and Building Inspectors, etc. and that it works well. J. Bubon discussed how the regional position would work.
 - d. Consensus to keep goal.
 - 1.3 Provide educational courses for first-time homebuyers (Med. 1-5 years)
 - a. Consensus to keep goal with the added verbiage “and others as appropriate” after homebuyers.
 - 1.4 Create a housing education resource center at appropriate Town buildings such as Town Hall, Center Office Building, and Senior Center and keep these updated with current materials.
 - a. Consensus to add as short term strategy for implementation, then ongoing to keep updated.
- Goal 2: Preserve and maintain existing affordable housing.
- 2.1 Develop a monitoring system to ensure that units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory do no expire (Med. 1-5 years).
 - a. J. Bubon discussed that the Subsidized Housing Inventory gets updated by the State every 2 years and then the Planning Dept. updated the Town’s affordable housing list when affordability restrictions are expiring. The trust will need guidance on this goal.
 - b. Consensus to keep goal.
 - 2.2 Establish a working relationship between the Sturbridge Housing Partnership and the town’s subsidizing agencies and monitoring agents (Short 0-12 months).
 - a. J. Bubon recommended that this be updated to say Sturbridge Housing Trust and stated that relationships with the CPC, Dept. of Housing, and CHAPA are important.
 - b. E. Goodwin asked clarification on CHAPA. J. Bubon explained CHAPA.
 - c. Consensus with changing Partnership to Trust and making this an ongoing strategy rather than short term.
 - 2.3 Create a homeowner rehabilitation assistance program to provide funds to income eligible owner-occupants to assist with repair, rehabilitation, or reconstruction of their homes (Long 5-10 years).
 - a. J. Bubon asked the Trust if they would like to shorter the goal term to Med. 1-5 years.
 - b. Consensus with the change that this be a Medium term goal 1-5 years.
- Goal 3: Enable a greater diversity of housing choices through regulatory action.
- 3.1 Amend the Accessory Dwelling Unit Bylaw (ATM 6-7-21).
 - a. Already completed ATM 6-7-21
 - 3.2 Explore adoption of a Workforce Housing Special Tax Assessment Area in which developers can be offered a property tax incentive to build housing affordable to middle-income residents (Med. 1-5 years).
 - a. J. Bubon stated that she wrote to CMRPC for examples of how other towns have done this but have not received a response yet. Suggested getting more information from Judi regarding this goal.

- b. Consensus that more information is needed on this strategy, need examples of implementation in other communities.
 - 3.3 Explore adoption of a Cottage Housing Bylaw (Ongoing – Town Planner is part of a CMRPC working ground developing a Model Bylaw).
 - a. J. Bubon stated that CMRPC just put together a regional group of six communities, in which Sturbridge is a part, to create a model cottage housing bylaw.
 - b. Town Planner will be part of regional working group with CMRPC to draft model bylaw – DLTA is being sought.
 - 3.4 Explore small-scale infill development options and adoption of affordable housing on non-complying lots (Short 0-12 months).
 - a. J. Bubon stated that she couldn't locate an appropriate area in town where this goal would make sense, since there isn't enough space. This could be changed to mixed use instead.
 - b. R. Grimm stated that this could make things too cluttered and doesn't really make sense for Sturbridge and agrees that this goal should be removed and replaced with something like mixed use or shop top development.
 - c. Consensus that an analysis in appropriate locations shows very little opportunity for this. Would rather look at areas to encourage more mixed use – shop top housing, etc. in appropriate zone, perhaps requiring a review of current bylaws to determine impediments, etc.
 - 3.5 Allow assisted living facilities to be developed in additional zoning districts in town (Med 1-5 years).
 - a. J. Bubon state that she thinks this is an appropriate goal.
 - b. Consensus to keep goal.
 - 3.6 Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw
 - a. J. Bubon stated that at the last meeting the Trust discussed inclusionary zoning and believes this is one strategy that would be appropriate for this goal.
 - b. Consensus to add goal.
- Goal 4: Leverage resources to advance housing production programs
- 4.1 Seek out and apply for funding and technical assistance for the implementation of the action plan (ongoing).
 - a. Consensus to keep goal.
 - 4.2 Establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund with an active Board of Trustees (done).
 - a. This goal is complete.
 - 4.3 Explore the creation of a buy-down program whereby the Town uses funds to buy-down market rate homes, deed restrict them as affordable in perpetuity, and sell them to income qualified, first time homebuyers at below market prices. (Long 5-10 years).
 - a. J. Bubon stated that other communities have done this and it allows the Housing Trust to buy down some of the price using CPC funds, it helps people who are already living in the community, takes existing housing stock and fixes them up

when needed instead of building new. She also stated that the Trust would need more information for this goal.

- b. E. Goodwin stated that the Town really doesn't have any houses that are dilapidated but there are some that are in need of renovation. Discussed the houses that are being renovated into apartments on Rt. 20. J. Bubon discussed the live/work studios. E. Goodwin asked how much the rent is for one of the new apartments. J. Bubon stated that it is \$2000 for a studio.

- c. Consensus to keep goal.

4.4 Create a down payment/closing cost assistance program whereby the Town provides grants to income eligible, first time homebuyers. (Med 1-5 years).

- a. Consensus to keep goal.

4.5 Establish a home improvement program whereby the Town provides zero or low interest loans to residents, targeting income eligible homeowners or owners of multi-family housing. (Long 5-10 years).

- a. Consensus to keep goal.

4.6 Continue to utilize CPA funds to further affordable housing goals. (Ongoing).

- a. Consensus to keep goal.

Goal 5: Provide housing opportunities and associated services to support diverse populations.

5.1 Advocate for higher inclusion of accessible units in proposed affordable housing developments. (Ongoing).

- a. J. Bubon stated that the Town only has a few handicap accessible affordable units.
- b. Consensus to keep goal.

5.2 Ensure new senior housing developments are located in walkable areas of town with access to transportation alternatives. (Ongoing).

- a. J. Bubon stated that the Town really doesn't have a lot of transportation alternatives.
- b. E. Goodwin stated that the Trust should push for this one. J. Bubon agreed that it's a critical goal for the Town.
- c. Consensus to keep goal.

5.3 Prepare design guidelines or standards for new multi-family housing developments. (Med. 1-5 years).

- a. J. Bubon discussed the last approved 40B development and stated that the Town should have some design guidelines in place when these type of developments are being built. This would be an ongoing goal.
- b. Consensus to keep goal.

5.4 Partner with private developers to create affordable housing. (Ongoing).

- a. E. Goodwin asked if there was currently any movement in Town regarding this goal. J. Bubon discussed the Habitat for Humanity houses, and discussed tax credits and that there are more opportunities that can be explored.
- b. Consensus to keep goal.

5.5 Institute a process to give projects that include affordable units a priority within the sewer allocation reserved for residential use. (Long 5-10 years).

- a. J. Bubon stated that this goal was a carry over from the previous Housing Plan and is no longer an issue.
- b. Consensus to remove – capacity at WWTP is no longer an issue after upgrades have been completed.

J. Bubon asked if there were any other goals the Trust wanted to add. – There were none.

Ed. Goodwin brought up 9 Holland Road and stated that it was a really nice place for mixed use but didn't go forward because of finances and pollution. R. Grimm stated that she has recently had a conversation with the owner and the owner is open to working with the Town. E. Goodwin discussed the background on the project and stated that groundwater tests were done but he was unsure of the outcome.

J. Bubon stated that Judi Barrett wants a list of people she can interview, she discussed the list she already had and asked if there was anyone else the Trust would like to add.

J. Goodwin suggested the schools, everyone agreed, and also suggested the school nurse.

J. Bubon also stated that she has received the approval paperwork for the Habitat for Humanity house of Cedar Street and that it would need to be signed by the Chair of the Board of Selectmen and the Chair of the Housing Trust.

Old/New Business

K. Neal asked if there was any old or new business.

- E. Goodwin stated that he wanted to tell W. Hersee that there were nesting swans in the water across from J. Goodwins house and suggested he take some pictures.
- K. Neal discussed the Best Practices for Affordable Housing Trust webinar and suggested that if anyone gets a chance they should watch it.

Next Steps

J. Bubon stated that the next meeting would be Tuesday April 18th at 4:30 pm but that they would need to end by 6:10 at the latest because there is a Board of Selectmen meeting at 6:30pm.

Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn.

By: J. Goodwin

2nd: W. Hersee

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

Meeting adjourned at 5:23pm