

Town of Ayer

Department of Community & Economic Development

Town Hall ♦ One Main Street ♦ Ayer, MA 01432 ♦ 978-772-8220 ♦ Ext.142



Minutes of August 25, 2021– Joint meeting of Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC) & Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT)

Location: Select Board Room, Ayer Town Hall

AAHC Members Present: Janet Providakes, Ron Morrison. Ken Diskin joined the meeting at 7:20.

AAHT Members Present: Shaun Copeland, Cyndi Lavin, Patricia Bagni-Latimer, Colleen Krieser, Jake Driscoll. Geoffrey Tillotson joined the meeting at 8:35.

Also, Present: Alicia Hersey, AAHC & AAHT Administrator, Ayer Community Development Program Manager, Connie Sullivan, and members of the Devenscrest Tenants Association. Also, present Sara Withee and Pauline Conley.

Shaun Copeland, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM: Shaun Copeland agreed to act as temporary Chair for the meeting.

Approve Agenda: Cyndi Lavin made a motion to move the discussion on Devenscrest to the top of the agenda. Colleen Krieser seconded it. The agenda was approved as amended. AAHT approved (5-0-0).

Discussion on Devenscrest: Alicia Hersey reported that the Town Manager, Robert Pontbriand, Assistant Town Manager, Carly Antonellis, Chair of the Select Board Shaun Copeland, Director of Community Development, Alan S. Manoian and herself had met with the Devenscrest Tenant's Association and Attorney Connie Sullivan to discuss the evictions at Devenscrest. Ms. Hersey explained that the Town Manager's office was trying to negotiate a meeting with owner, Brady Sullivan, and the Devenscrest Tenant's Association to discuss a group extension so the 44 families could stay in their homes.

Denise Perrault a resident of Devenscrest spoke on the difficult position the Devenscrest tenants have found themselves in. She cited a project in Lawrence as an example of affordable housing financed by the state.

Rick Harmon – resident of Nashua, NH, and organizer of the Devenscrest Tenant Association. He explained that there were 44 families of the original 110 families that were interested in staying at Devenscrest. He noted that this changes the finances of the tenants wish to have their units be designated affordable. He mentioned that the Tenants association was working with a nonprofit from Acton.

Connie Sullivan, Esq. resident of Ayer, 79 East Main St. spoke about the need for the Town to consider taking 45 Devenscrest units by eminent domain. Ken Diskin asked Mr. Sullivan if he know of any examples in the State of Massachusetts that eminent domain was used to take private property for housing. Mr. Sullivan said that he could not cite an example at this time. But that he felt it was important to keep eminent domain on the table to help

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negotiations. Attorney Sullivan also reported that Senator Eldridge was contacting the State's Ways and Means committee for possible funding.

Alicia Hersey explained that in her experience debt services per unit of subsidized affordable housing could not exceed \$170,000 per new unit. She cited the Groton Housing Authority townhouse units on Sandy Pond Road, Groton MA as an example. She explained that she had been involved in the building of those units when she sat on the Groton Housing Authority, as well as 3 to 5 years after the units were built and the authorities management of those units. Groton Housing Authority rented two of those units as low-income units and the other 7 units as moderate-income units. She explained that the debt service was carried by Mass Development and that the budget was very tight. Ms. Hersey explained that in this case the land was donated, and the debt service included only the building of the new units and some soft costs.

Mr. Diskin suggest the group use the Town GIS system to identify units. Sara Withee offered a GIS document she has access to.

Janet Providakes called the Ayer Affordable Housing Committee to order at 7:40

Ayer Rental Assistance Program: The members of the Committee and Trust discussed advantages of different types of rental assistance programs. The conclusion was that assistance should be for a 1 year period at \$500 per month and initially assisting 5 families. Five families for one year at \$500 per month would be a budget of \$30,000.

It was agreed that the initial funding of the Trust, \$30,000 would fund the first year, trial period. The Ayer Affordable Trust could then go to the CPC and bring a warrant article to Town Meeting in the Spring for additional funds.

Ayer Commons – 40B/Comprehensive Permit Proposal: Alicia Hersey presented the Ayer Commons chapter 40B development plans which have been filed with the State by Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) a nonprofit from East Boston. Ms. Hersey reported that the Town was given notice of NOAH's filing with the State for approval of their Tax Credit funded Chapter 40B request for comprehensive permit, and subsequently DHCD has requested comments from the Town. Ms. Hersey said that the Town has requested their comment period be extended to September 30, and that the developer would me making a presentation at the upcoming Land Use meeting on September 2nd as well as the Select Board meeting on September 21st.

New Business: September meeting times for the Committee and Trust were set. The AAHT agreed to meet September 15, 2021, at 6:00 pm. The AAHT set the intention to elect officers for the Trust at the upcoming September meeting.

The AAHC agreed to meet at their regular meeting time, September 24th at 10:00 am.

Meeting Adjourned

Ron Morrison motioned to adjourned, Patricia Bagni-Latimer seconded at 9:26 pm.
AAHC (3-0-0) AAHT (5-0-0)

