

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SOMERVILLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

Mary Cassesso, Managing Trustee

Trustees
Michael Feloney
Kathryn Gallant
David Gibbs
Donna Haynes
Andrea Shapiro
Councilor Kristen Strezo
Brielle Short
Jessica Turner

Minutes
June 11, 2020 Meeting – 5:15pm

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone’s Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, this meeting of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust was conducted via remote participation.

Trustees present: Mike Feloney, Kathryn Gallant, David Gibbs, Donna Haynes, Andrea Shapiro, Brielle Short, Kristen Strezo

Trustees not present: Mary Cassesso, Jessica Turner

Staff attending: Heidi Burbidge, OSPCD Housing Division

Other attending: Mark Alston-Follansbee, CAAS

Meeting started at 5:20pm with Andrea Shapiro serving as chair.

1. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Trustees reviewed draft minutes of the May 14, 2020 Trust meeting. Mike Feloney introduced a **motion** to approve the May, 2020 meeting minutes which was seconded by Katie Gallant and **PASSED** by roll call vote, 6-0.

2. Communications

Transmission of semi-annual Trust report to the CPC and notification of projected FY21 CPA housing appropriation

- Heidi Burbidge distributed a copy of the Spring 2020 Trust report to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). She noted that she had prepared the report and presented it to the CPC at their May meeting as she does twice a year. Heidi reported that at the meeting CPC members voted to set the FY21 CPA housing appropriation at 50% of the total CPA funds available, which was the same percentage used for FY20. She noted that the initial estimate for that amount is \$1,082,482, of which \$314,500 will be debt service on 100 Homes leaving \$767,982 of available FY21 CPA funds for Trust-funded projects and programs.

Transmission of report to the City Council on SAHT meeting of May 14, 2020

- Heidi distributed a copy of a summary of May’s Trust meeting that she had prepared at Kristen Strezo’s request and was shared with the City Council at their May 28th meeting.

Clarendon Hill - project status update

- Katie reported the project team had begun presenting the project at the previous evening's meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA). She reported that Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) had been working with Housing Opportunities Unlimited, the firm that had been hired to help with resident relocation. Katie reported that some residents of Clarendon had relocated to units at SHA's Mystic public housing development; as of June there were about 15-20 additional available units that could potentially be used for relocation. Relocation work has been slowed somewhat by the COVID-19 pandemic, as some residents have been reluctant to move during it. Katie noted that there are both state-aided and federally-funded units at Mystic; Massachusetts-funded developments now use a centralized waiting list. As a result, SHA could not fill those units directly from a Somerville-only list.

Mike noted that given the size and complexity of the Clarendon project, the ZBA presentation and discussion likely will take two or three meetings.

Trustee reappointments – status-

- Heidi reported that the Mayor's staff had informed her that with "budget season" underway (and with budget consideration expected to be especially challenging this year given pandemic and other issues affecting municipal budget), reappointments likely will not take place until after the budget process has finished.

Trust Home Rule Petition – status update

- Heidi reported that City Legislative Liaison Khushbu Webber had contacted her after the May Trust meeting to follow up on a question from Senator Jehlen's staff about whether the Community Preservation Coalition was supportive of the Trust Home Rule Petition (HRP). Heidi reported that she and CPA Manager Judith Tumusiime had reached out to the Coalition's Executive Director Stuart Saginor and had scheduled a call with him for June 17th. She noted that Senator Jehlen's staff said that they are working to advance the Trust HRP; Heidi will ask Khushbu to keep the Senator's office informed of Somerville City staff's communications with the Coalition.

FY20 CPA request – 31 Tufts Street

- Heidi noted that in April Trustees had approved a \$1,000,000 request from E3 Development in support of its proposal to create 15 affordable units at 31 Tufts Street, subject to review of final budget and other non-local funding commitments. Heidi reported since that time DHCD asked E3 to submit a full application for the project. She reported that Housing staff were drafting a commitment letter based on the Trust's April discussion. The letter will state that up to \$1,000,000 has been reserved by the Trust for a zero-interest loan for the Project, contingent on a full and final project budget showing other commitments and terms. Heidi also noted that staff were reviewing terms for comparable recent projects, including SHA's Waterworks and 181 Washington Street developed by SCC.

Housing program contract balances during COVID-19 emergency

- Heidi noted that meeting materials circulated the day before included a table that showed client assistance funds available on Trust-funded housing program contracts. She reported that on June 9th, Just-a-Start had \$68,301 available, Somerville Homeless Coalition had \$139,929 available and CAAS had \$21,256 remaining available.

3. Ongoing Business

Trust strategic planning process – schedule discussion

- Heidi noted that in November Trustees had discussed scheduling the Trust's strategic planning process to begin after the Trust Home Rule Petition process was complete. Andrea

noted the view that deferring the process that time still made sense, as the HRP would reauthorize funding of activities in support of housing program uses.

Mike noted that such reauthorization would return Trust activities to where they were prior to recent restrictive DOR decisions, and so wouldn't be introducing wholly new funding areas. Trustees asked Heidi to share the Request for Information that had been issued to select the consultant who led the 2014 process before the next Trust meeting in case the document can help inform the next strategic planning process.

4. New Business

Monthly CPA reports for February, March and April

- Heidi reviewed activity between February and April which included a closing on an additional 100 Homes property in March.

Monthly non-CPA financial reports for January, February, March and April

- Heidi reviewed activity between January and April that included linkage payments received by the Trust (February and March), an inclusionary fractional payment received in March, and a loan commitment made to E3 Development for its 31 Tufts Street project in April.

At 6:05pm David Gibbs recused himself and left the meeting and Mark Alston-Follansbee joined the meeting.

Request from Community Action Agency of Somerville for additional housing stability program funds

- Mark Alston-Follansbee presented a request from CAAS for \$200,000 of additional CPA Trust funds for CAAS's Homelessness Prevention Assistance Fund. He noted that CAAS staff did not expect that the City's additional \$1.5 million of CDBG CARES Act funding would meet housing stability needs of Somerville residents who would be applying for assistance. CAAS had \$21,256.51 remaining on their contract. He reported that CAAS was also managing the Somerville Cares fund for the City and that over the first three weeks they had received over 900 applications to that fund, with the majority for assistance with rental arrears. He reported that CAAS had focused assistance toward households who had no income over the previous two months.

Mark noted a Boston Globe article that estimated up to one-third of Massachusetts residents had missed rent or mortgage payments since the coronavirus pandemic began and that up to 60% of renters in Massachusetts would not be able to pay their rent if the crisis were to go on for six more months. Mark reported that landlord groups had been cited by the Globe saying that the eviction moratorium was delaying up to 30,000 evictions in Massachusetts. Mark noted that CAAS staff expected the when the moratorium ends there would be a sharp increase in demand for assistance. Brielle Short asked how CAAS would be prioritizing applicants given the assumption that there would not be enough funding to assist all applicants. Mark noted that CAAS anticipated prioritizing those whose arrears go back the furthest.

Mark left the meeting at 6:15pm.

Heidi shared a table showing the amount that the City had allocated for housing assistance in response to needs generated during the coronavirus pandemic. She noted these funds included \$750,831 of ESG CARES Act funds, \$1,490,384 of CDBG CARES Act funds and \$80,000 of Flex funds administered by the Office of Housing Stability. Brielle noted that CDBG funds can only be used for prospective rent and not for rental arrears. (ESG can be used for rental arrears.)

She noted that landlords apply any assistance received to rental arrearages before prospective rent. Brielle also noted that to be eligible to receive Trust funds clients must have sustainable tenancies. Brielle noted that each of the agencies have just one or two staff people to manage the Tenancy Stabilization programs and that if landlords start issuing Notices to Quit as soon as the moratorium is lifted then the increased intake conducted by limited staff would slow response time.

Mike noted that the Trust could approve at least a portion of this amount as an interim measure to ensure that CAAS staff could continue operating the program while other resources were explored. Mike noted that approving the request from CAAS for \$200,000 in additional CPA funds would mean doubling their contract by amendment which would set a precedent for the other agencies to make the same request. He noted that the City limits contract amendments for City funds to 20% of the original contract.

Mike offered a **motion** that the Trust to vote to approve an amendment adding up to \$40,000 of CPA funds to the Trust's Homelessness Prevention Assistance Fund contract with CAAS. Katie Gallant seconded the motion and it PASSED 6-0 by roll call vote.

5. Announcements- none

A **motion** was made to adjourn which was seconded and PASSED, 6-0.

Next meeting date – The next meeting date will be Thursday, July 9, 2020 at 5:15pm. It will be held remotely using GoToWebinar. Instructions to join the meeting will be provided on the meeting agenda posted at City Hall.

Documents distributed:

- Draft May Trust meeting minutes
- Semi-annual Trust report to the CPC
- Report to the City Council on SAHT meeting of May 14, 2020
- Housing program contract balances during COVID-19 emergency
- Monthly CPA financial reports for February, March and April
- Monthly non-CPA financial reports for January, February, March and April
- Request from Community Action Agency of Somerville for additional housing stability program funds