

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
July 9, 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: Mary Cassesso, Mike Feloney, Kathryn Gallant, David Gibbs, Donna Haynes, Andrea Shapiro, Kristen Strezo, Jessica Turner

Trustees not present: Brielle Short

Staff attending: Heidi Burbidge, OSPCD Housing Division

Other attending: One member of the public, Bailey Hu, joined the meeting in progress.

Meeting started at 5:15pm with Mary Cassesso serving as chair.

1. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

Trustees reviewed draft minutes of the June 11, 2020 Trust meeting. Kristen Strezo introduced a **motion** to approve the June, 2020 meeting minutes which was seconded by Donna Haynes and **PASSED** by roll call vote 8-0.

2. Communications

Trust Home Rule Petition – status update

- Heidi Burbidge noted that at the June Trust meeting she had informed Trustees that staff for Senator Jehlen had asked the City’s Legislative Liaison Khushbu Weber whether the statewide Community Preservation Coalition had provided any opinion about the Trust’s Home Rule Petition (HRP). Heidi reported that on June 16th she had spoken with the Coalition’s Executive Director; Stuart Saginor explained that steering committee members had no issues with the HRP and that he would work with Khushbu to get in touch with the Senator’s office in order to convey that information to them as requested. Heidi noted that she had asked Stuart to continue to keep Khushbu informed going forward and that she would continue to touch base with on HRP status.

Housing program contract balances during COVID-19 emergency declaration

- Heidi noted that meeting materials circulated included a table that showed client assistance funds available on Trust-funded housing program contracts. She reported that as of July 3rd,

there was a total of roughly \$285,800 in total funds available for client assistance, between the Trust contracts with Just-a-Start, Somerville Homeless Coalition and the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS). Mary Cassesso noted that the table showed fluctuations in the amount of client assistance funds awarded from month to month, with an overall upward trend in the amount of assistance the three agencies had provided. Mary noted that the amount awarded by CAAS was significantly greater in June than in May. David Gibbs reported that CAAS was continuing to receive a high volume of requests for assistance, and that at the same time it was challenging to work with clients to process applications under social distancing requirements. He reported that in addition to Trust funds, CAAS had administered a total of approximately \$400,000 in assistance to Somerville residents from the Somerville CARES fund between April and June, and that CAAS staff had been using those funds where possible in advance of spending down Trust funds.

Trust meeting schedule for August and September

- Mary noted that in previous years Trustees had taken a one-month hiatus from monthly Trust meetings during either August or September. Trustees agreed to forgo that practice this year, and hold meetings in August and September 2020 unless it was determined that there were no time-sensitive matters that could not be taken up the following month.

Jessica Turner joined the meeting at 5:25pm.

FY21 CPA RFP schedule

- Heidi reported on the anticipated schedule for the Trust's two FY21 CPA Request for Proposals (RFPs) for affordable housing development project requests and affordable housing program requests. She noted her expectation the RFPs would be issued September 21st, with a projected deadline of November 2nd. The intent is to enable the Trust to review proposals in November to allow time to determine whether there may be need to request flexible FY21 CPA funds from the Community Preservation Committee in addition to the 50% appropriation for housing.

Clarendon Hill - project status update

- Jessica Turner reported that Clarendon Hill tenant relocation efforts had been temporarily interrupted by response to COVID-19 pandemic but that assessments of individual households' relocation needs had resumed, and that there would be a lottery held to facilitate offers for relocation opportunities. She reported that the Clarendon Hill project had been presented and discussed at two Zoning Board meetings and that further review at one or two additional meetings was anticipated. Jessica reported that there had been positive feedback at Zoning Board meetings about the redesign of the street and traffic configuration, and that in her opinion it would be much safer than what is currently in place.

3. Ongoing Business

Trust strategic planning process – schedule discussion

- Mary noted that the Trust has typically undertaken a strategic planning process every 5 years or so to consider guidelines for allocation of Trust funds and related issues. She noted that having new Trustees take part in strategic planning would enrich the process. She noted that the Trust guidelines had typically used a formula of 2/3 of funds set-aside for development projects with the balance for funding awards made through a Request for Proposal process to housing programs and housing-related social services.

Mary noted that passage of the Trust Home Rule Petition would allow the Trust to resume funding for housing-related social services. Andrea noted basic support for going ahead to issue a strategic planning RFP but reiterated the need to keep in mind that Trustees plan to change the Trust documents to allow the Trust to encompass funding it has not been able to award for several years due to state Department of Revenue rulings on funding programs.

Kristen asked if the timing for the legislature to pass the Home Rule Petition was known. Mike Feloney noted that Heidi had worked with Khushbu to facilitate a connection between Senator Jehlen's office and the Community Preservation Coalition and that staff would be prompting the Mayor's office and George Proakis on the fact that the legislative session would end on July 31st.

Kristen Strezo left the meeting at 5:40pm.

Mary noted that Trustees were willing to do advocacy on behalf of the Trust Home Rule Petition. Mike noted that if Trustees wanted to themselves reach out to delegation members that would be welcome. Mary suggested that all the Trustees who could do so should reach out to Senator Jehlen's office to let them know how important the issue is to the Trust.

Subsequently in the meeting Mary noted that Heidi had shared a list of strategic planning consultants and asked Trustees to provide additional names and information for the list. Heidi noted that she had also distributed the Request for Price Quotations for the 2014 process along with the Trust Strategic Visioning Report as requested by Trustees at the previous meeting. Donna asked staff to solicit feedback from Assistant Housing Director and former staff to the Trust Kelly Donato, on her experience as Trust staff working with previous planning consultants.

Katie Gallant asked about the process for selecting the consultant. Mary noted that in the past, Trustees had reviewed all of the responses received from interested consultants and asked for a few to come in to talk to Trustees. Mike noted that procurement would need to follow City requirements. Heidi noted that Thupten Chukhatsang from the City's Purchasing Department staff had informed her that choosing vendors for contracts under \$10,000 can be considered a Sound Business Procurement and Mary noted that the Trust likes to have comparative proposals through that process.

Heidi Burbidge noted that a member of the public, Bailey Hu had joined the meeting.

4. New Business

Monthly CPA and non CPA financial reports for May

- Heidi reported that Trust CPA fund activity in May 2020 was limited to interest earned and paid out to the CPC account resulting in \$412,287 of CPA funds available for commitments. She reported that non-CPA Trust fund activity in May 2020 was limited to one loan repayment and interest earned resulting in \$4,739,892 of non-CPA Trust funds available for commitment.

5. Announcements- none

A **motion** was made to adjourn which was seconded and PASSED, 7-0.

Next meeting date – The next meeting date will be Thursday, August 13, 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 and on the City's website.

Documents distributed:

- Draft July Trust meeting minutes
- Housing program contract balances during COVID-19 emergency
- List of strategic planning consultants
- Trust Strategic Visioning Report
- Monthly CPA financial report for May
- Monthly non-CPA financial report for May