

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SOMERVILLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND**

*JOSEPH A. CURTATONE*

*MAYOR*

*Mary Cassesso, Managing Trustee*

*Trustees*

Dana LeWinter  
Tony Lafuente  
Donna Haynes  
Beth Munroe-Howe  
Daniel LeBlanc  
Eleanor Rances  
Andrea Shapiro

**Minutes**

**December 11, 2013 Meeting – 6:15 PM**

Conference Room, Third Floor, City Hall  
93 Highland Avenue Somerville MA 02143

Trustees Present: Andrea, Dana and Beth

Trustees Absent: Mary, Tony, Donna, Daniel and Eleanor

Guest Present: Susan Connelly, MHP

The meeting began at 6:15 PM.

1. Notes on Susan Connelly's presentation on Housing Trusts (note an MHP Operating Manual for Trusts is coming out in March 2014 – there will be a section on strategic plans and Susan will share an advance copy when the draft is ready)

**CPC & Trust Discussion**

How can we position ourselves to be a conduit for CPC funding and how do we regularly get funding from the CPC?

At this point, City CPC staff have not yet reached out to MHP. CPCs are also subject to 30B just like the Trust. If such an allocation goes to the Trust, they allocate the required 10% plus a portion of the 70% of fungible funds. The CPC could make a decision on a project and allocate funding to an existing group. The CPC though is only a recommending board and the Board of Alderman must vote on all funding.

We can advocate for funding on housing to go into the Housing Trust Fund. We must maintain consistency with City policy and the less groups typically the better. MHP has generally found its best for the CPC not to make decisions on things like parks but use existing groups like a Trust. Its arguable the Trust knows best the intent of the City and works closely with the Planning Division and they find its more user friendly to not have to go to the Trust and a CPC. The Trust would give regular updates to the CPC. Susan strongly recommended ways to encourage transparency. They also recommended frequent check ins to make sure the Trust is meeting goals and needs should the funding go through the Trust.

She suggested we could advocate for setting aside just the 10% and allow for the ability increase if the Trust is successful in working with the CPC. We then discussed if you can get anchored into a lower amount and it being difficult to increase it once a precedent is set.

Cambridge commits the full 70% of discretionary funding to Housing.

### **Strategic Visioning Discussion**

Its better for the Trust to be more complete on their terms up front if possible. Lower interest rates and payback from cash flow makes sense. Susan recommended not tying an interest rate to something. She did suggest picking one interest rate for a year and re-evaluating the interest rate on an annual basis. At an annual meeting, it would be best practice to tick through big things like interest rates on Trust loans.

Other Trusts have put out an RFP for City owned land (Norfolk). We could possibly look into Buying down property to make it affordable. Winchester Housing Partnership has \$1 million in linkage fees and they are looking to buy down units to a 110% level of affordability. If we were to put funding into a project in this manner, the funding sits as a soft loan at 0% interest and if the affordability is violated, we can pull back our funding.

### **Grant Program Discussion**

Try to narrow in the strategic plan and grant process --- less projects, but more funding in each project to yield greater impact. Transparency – we can have a 4 year plan that has a different objective each year. We can use the annual meeting to determine annual priorities. Ex: grants up to \$10,000 for x number of agencies. Agencies typically benefit from multi-year commitments. Maybe with the TSP Program implement a 2 year grant term? Look at the Trust website and make it more inclusive.

### **Other Thoughts**

Connect with the ZBA. Especially in the context of the green line extension – get ahead of things with solid planning.

Barry Bluestone is pushing for more student housing at Northeastern – you have to partner with a University and be mindful of potential fair housing issues.

Artist housing – you must be really specific with the type of artist and create slop sinks and other things to safely handle chemicals.

2. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM.

The next meeting will be Thursday 1/9 at 6:15pm.

