

Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

**October 10, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting called to order, members present: Maxine Kinhart, Susan Younis, Amy Frigulietti, Kimberly Mu-Chow, Jaya Vijayaraghavan, Jamie Hellen, Chris V.
Member absent: Chris Feeley
Also present: Bryan Taberner**

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes:
August 15, 2023 – need more information on the request for funds for a development brought by Chris Feeley. No Vote taken.
2. Affordable Housing Update – Maxine is in talks with the daughter of the owner of 144 Grey Wolf Drive. She has indicated that she is ready to sell. The owner is deceased. The condo has been vacant for 2 – 3 years.
3. Update: Community Intervention Team – Susan spoke with Danielle and had a conversation of what can be done by the trust, what are the conversation points, what are the talking points, what are the take away points and so forth. We kind of backed off spearheading something like that as we understand that we cannot fund anything, but we definitely want to be part of the conversation and to have a seat at that table and be part of those conversations. Believe that there has been one meeting already.

Kim Mu-Chow stated that she has been member of that group for two years. It was something that Maggie Gunderson started. She thinks Danielle's vision is to change it from that. She gave a lot of information to the group. The group of us has been helping the homeless. Danielle talked about its time to do fuel assistance, stuff like that. She thinks Danielle's vision is to turn it into something else. We did have Danielle's component as part of it, but we also did other things and I think she wants to make it more focused. I don't think the group has met since Maggie left and that has been a while.

Chris V. is pleased to hear about this group and affordable housing. We, as the Housing Trust, have a longer term approach to affordable housing and housing solutions. There is an immediate need and there are a bunch of groups that are addressing that immediate need. Our situation is a little different than what those folks are addressing, but we thought that there was some value in getting together. Kimberly, I am very pleased you are a part of that. Is that through the Church? Yes, the New England Chapel and also for the Milford Regional Medical Center. I'm on the sub-committee for homelessness as part of their community benefits advisory group.

Amy added that Danielle did reach out to her last week about this team. A member of the fire department is also coordinating with her and they are interested in meeting in

the next few weeks to kind of bring some internal stakeholders together first and then broadening it out again just to get everyone up to speed. Jaime had asked her to bring together some of our social service organizations along with some of our departments and do a round table. It sounds like this is already being done but she doesn't know much about it. She wants to get more information from her to understand what the role of the team is.

Jamie added that an intervention team cannot be made up of just the Senior Center, the police department, the school district, or individual entities. A community is a community, it's everybody. We're trying to bring all those folks together. We already have in a lot of ways with the migrant related issue, so we're probably going to have an extension of that. There is no housing available in Massachusetts anymore and there is no emergency shelter space. I think everybody is familiar with the migrant issue. There is no room, literally, no housing and that's why the hotels are being filled at a pretty high rate. State wide occupancy of hotel rooms is about 4-5 percent of hotel rooms. It is thousands and thousands and thousands of rooms. This is an issue that is going to go on for a while. It's clear that our local governments are going to be expected to deliver a certain set of something. The problem is going to get worse before it gets better. We will include the Trust in that broader effort. The Community Intervention Team was not the whole community; it was just a few people who were getting together that cared about social services. The problems that we are facing today are well beyond what that initial model tried to be and it's too much for Danielle and the staff to handle somehow on their own. We have two new mental health clinician case workers at the police department. We've got a lot of things going on. Hopefully, in the next several months, we'll be able to roll out a larger profile and we will certainly let the trust know as things move on.

Chris wanted to know what the current situation today is. Do we have folks in the hotels in town? Jamie added we have one hotel, the Best Western. It's about half full; about 150-160 people and about 40 school aged children. You have the normal routine integration issues that you have school bus logistics, education needs logistics, state reimbursement logistics other than those things the situation seems to be relatively stable so far. We expect the second half of the hotel to be filled up later this year, this month, or the fall. As Secretary Augustus and the Governor have clearly stated, there is just no space. How that all gets dealt with is being dealt with at the state level. What happens from here on out remains to be seen.

Question of where are they coming from and is this a long term situation? Many have been coming from Haiti. Some of them have been here for quite some time. They've been in New York or other states or other parts of Massachusetts. Some are from Venezuela. We have had some from Massachusetts that are in need of housing assistance or have been in other areas of the Commonwealth and are moving around because they are part of the shelter system. The state has partnered with the hotel for a

year lease that began in July 1. So we know that it's at least a year. Don't know where people are going to go. This is a question for the Governor. Once these people are on their own and working and able to pay rent, where are they going to go because there is such a shortage of housing for people.

Jamie added it's a fragmented system between the federal government, the state level, and the local level. At a manager's conference last week in Austin, I got to go to a session with the managers of El Paso TX, Brownsville TX, and a couple of cities in California that deal with this every day. They said the most important thing to do is get a migrant family connected to another family of the same ethnicity or the same country of origin. That's the way to get people up on their feet quicker and gets them more comfortable and acclimated to a community. It's proven time and time again, if we want to integrate individuals into society and paying taxes, getting jobs etc., we need to find where their family, friends or folks from their country of origin are to be able to link them up with grocery stores, and transit services. All these things are a piece of the equation. There is a world of global unrest happening. People are moving and this is going to continue for a while. State government and federal leaders need to figure out a system where we can move people around easier and better and expedite applications, whatever it is. New York City is busing people out of New York City to other parts of New York. We're probably going to see that happen at some point. It is going to be a long term thing.

Chris V. wanted to know about meeting in person. Can we get together without it being a meeting? Would it be an open meeting law? Jamie said yes you can, you just can't deliberate or take votes. You can post a meeting just to be safe. Chris asked if we would have to offer zoom. Jamie said there is no requirement to offer zoom. He has never met Susan, Kim, and Jaya. He would like to have an in-person at some point. Jamie stated that we have the training room, room 205, or council chambers. Do we have to have zoom meeting. There's no requirement to offer Zoom.

Jaya offered to do things for the committee. She could do it offline and provide information at the next meeting. Chris said that there is nothing at this point. Susan kind of reported back about what she has learned about the community intervention team. In the past we have had different properties that have come to market. We may be asking you at some point.

Chris stated that it was good to see Bryan at the Harvest Fest. It's always a good event and thanked Bryan for his services. Bryan stated that a rain date causes stress, but this year we had a lot of high school and Dean Collage volunteers.

Motion by Susan to Adjourn, **Second** by Jaime. **Roll Call:** Maxine-Yes, Susan-Yes, Kim-Yes, Jaya-Yes, Jaime-Yes, Amy-Yes, Chris V.-Yes. **Vote: 7-0-1**

Submitted by Maxine Kinhart