

Merrimac Affordable Housing Board of Trustees
Minutes
February 10, 2022

- I. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. by Chair Sandra Venner.
- II. **Present:** Sandra Venner, Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Phil Parry, Dawne Young, Holly Moran and Brienne Walsh.
- III. **Approval of Minutes for September 2, 2021.** With a motion by Board member Dawne Young and a second by Phil Parry, board members approved the minutes for the board's September 2, 2021 meeting.
- IV. **Status of The Flats at Merrimac Square:** Chair Venner reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals opened the public hearing on February 3 and will continue the hearing on March 3, 2022. Peer review of materials will be sent to the Conservation Commission for review. Mass Housing Partnership has provided some guidance. Another site walk is planned with the ZBA. Town Department members spoke with concern for water and sewer. Some residents voiced concern about the height of the buildings and number of units. The project proposes 180 units versus the 144 units that along with the NSCDC project at Little Court and School Street would allow the Town's subsidized Housing Inventory to reach the goal of 10 percent of the town's housing. Chair Venner will remind the ZBA of the total of affordable units needed to reach the Town's goal.
- V. **Grant for Consultant to update Zoning Bylaws re: affordable housing:** Chair Venner reported that the town's Building Department went through the Housing Choice Program to seek a \$20,000 grant to assist the town in updating the Zoning Bylaws in order to be more creative with affordable housing options.
- VI. **Zoning for Multi-Family Housing in MBTA Communities – Chapt 40A Sec. 3A.** Considered to be an MBTA Community due to the proximity of commuter rail stations in Haverhill, the new law requires the town to create a zoning district of sufficient size to allow multi-family housing by right (with three or more units and no special permit required). Board member Phil Parry said the law will have substantial impacts to smaller communities. Chair Venner said the BOS will meet with the Planning Board on Feb. 28 and consider whether or not to submit the form noting that the town will plan to establish the zoning district. The town can opt out of the requirement but the consequence would be that the town would not be eligible for the Healthy Choice grant program. Board members questioned whether or not the amount of potential grant money is worth the potential costs that the zoning requirement would have on the town. Board member Phil Parry said the new law requires contiguous town properties, much of which is wetland and conserved. He said it would be a density bonus for developers and would dramatically change what the town looks like. The new zoning district would have to be approved at Town Meeting, Chair Venner said.

- VII. **Proposal for Planning Consultant- request Letter of Support:** Chair Venner said Denise Maquire has been working as a professional consultant to the Building Department. Town Administrator Carol MacLeod thinks a proposal for \$10,000 would allow a consultant to support the ZBA and Planning Board. The AFHT also needs to support to maintain the Town's Affordable Housing Inventory and avoid the loss of units. With a motion by Board member Phil Parry and a second by Holly Moran, board members agreed to provide a Letter of Support for the position.
- VIII. **Correspondence:** The Town has received email from Ron McCormick at CHAPA regarding the Town's Right of First Refusal for an affordable housing unit at 19 Broad Street. The affordable unit could be purchased for \$235,000 by the Town before Feb. 15. If the Town does not exercise its option, CHAPA will seek a qualified buyer who meets the income requirement of 70 percent of the area's income. With a motion by board member Phil Parry and a second by Brienne Walsh, board members agreed not to exercise the right of first refusal to purchase the condominium.
- IX. **Scheduling Next Meeting and Adjournment.** The board will meet again on either April 21 or April 28.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Secretary, April 18, 2022