

**Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Affordable Housing Committee, Town of Oak Bluffs,
held on Sep 20th 2022 at 5pm at Room #110, Town Hall.**

Present:

K. Mark Leonard, Chair
Jim Bishop
Peter Bradford
Katherine Donahue

Absent:

Mark Crossland

In Attendance:

Linda Call
Phil Cordello
Matrice Ellis-Kirk
Liz Volchok
Dan Slatella
David Vigneault

1. Call to Order

Chair Mark Leonard called the meeting to order at 5.04pm.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of Aug 2nd 2022 were approved, as proposed by Jim Bishop and seconded by Katherine Donahue, with Pete abstaining (absent).

3. Updates from the Chair

3.1 Green Villa project – the Town has been approached by DHCD about this, and Chair had sent the attachment out to all members. Town has 30 days to respond. This is ‘next door’ to the Southern Tier project, is on the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road, and proposes a 3 story building of 52 apts. It is also an independent project ie not Town sponsored, and the Town may have questions and concerns.

Chair said that he will monitor input and expects to have more discussion on this at the next meeting.

3.2 Noyes Apts – Chair has talked with Melissa, who has submitted the needed permit requests; the Housing Choice Grant that we won for Noyes has seen all of its 97K fully utilized; essential costs like heating, cooling, cabinetry, have been covered; total project costs are now at 407K; and we had 387K approved out of the Housing Trust for it; whatever is not used will be returned to the Trust. We had to fully fund the project using the Housing Trust at the time. Chair also noted that if there are overages the Housing Trust can provide a buffer if need be. The original timeline was to start project construction at the end of September and be done by

the end of January. We would need to set up a lottery process at that time and Chair will talk to David later in the week about that.

David Vigneault said that this was good news - he would draft a package on Noyes for AHC review.

3.3 Chair noted that Habitat for Humanity's Prospect Ave house is now taking applications until the October 14. Their Eastville project expects to have folks move in somewhere in October as well.

3.4 Chair mentioned that he had made a presentation on AHC's work to the Town's Finance Committee; it was well received. Both the BOS Chair and the Town Administrator were present. Chair had also raised the possibility that part of short-term rental income tax could be used to support the work of the Housing Trust.

3.4.1 Jim brought up the question and/or possibility of having an Emergency Fund, perhaps in the amount of 12K, set aside; sometimes in the middle of the year we find a landlord willing to rent, and if have some money set aside we can make that work. Perhaps David would comment?

3.4.2 David said that such rental assistance funding was indeed a wonderful thought! DCHD is now down to some 50 odd landlords; short-term rental tax funds would be a great idea; perhaps Oak Bluffs would be the 1st Town to do this. David would look at the numbers carefully and provide a status report, going forward; he also noted that rental assistance has served as a placeholder.

David also noted that in past situations of encountering a 'middle year landlord' OB CPC had helped out. But DHCD is losing landlords and has not been able to 'restore' them. They are considering options right now and will probably reduce their requests across the board. There are limitations. Can subsidies be raised? That would be a significant program change. And rental assistance could make the difference.

3.4.3 Pete asked if David had an analysis as to why the decrease in landlords? David's response mentioned competition, short term rentals and rental property being sold and so going off the rental market.

3.4.4 Chair noted that the Housing Bank could also be another funding source. David's response to this was on the possibility of offering rentals at 120-140% and maybe that way some of the rentals could go up a couple of thousand.

4. Renaming Southern Tier

4.1 Chair said that he had sent out information on the renaming to all members; then he did a screen share of the IHT material and turned to Liz Volchok for IHT's presentation.

Liz provided a brief presentation on the Wampanoag background and etymology pertaining to the name "Takenash", and the option of choosing between "Field" and "Knoll."

Chair noted IHT's recommendations, and said that AHC could approve of the name, and it would then go to the BOS for their final okay.

4.2 Jim wondered about the possibility of pushback from the Townsfolk on the proposed name; perhaps it might be important to get input from townsfolk on this. Pete asked what Liz could share about her outreach and consulting on the renaming project. Liz mentioned talking with Museum folk, the NAACP, the Wampanoag tribe, but not of outreach to OB townsfolk.

4.3 Chair said that AHC should vote, and Chair would then take it to Town Admin and see how they want to proceed re feedback issues from the town.

4.4 After some discussion, and a proposal from Jim, seconded by Pete, and agreed to by all members present, AHC decided to go with Takenash Knoll. Chair thanked Liz for her presentation and the information shared. He would follow up.

5. Veteran Housing Project Update

5.1 Chair said that he is working to schedule a meeting for next week so that the process for going forward might be clearly set out; Town Counsel has indicated that since the land is owned by the Town, the BOS is the final authority on procedure and process; nevertheless, the Chair will present Minutes and abutter comments, so that the RFP would reflect all such concerns. The issues thus far have revolved around those of access, traffic and proximity.

5.2 Linda Call, Bellevue abutter, raised a question about whether the project would be taken to Town Meeting; as described, the project is much closer to her property than expected; proximity is a major concern; and the Tower Ridge Association folk had similar and related questions for eg, on the land being next to the transfer station; who has the final say, the residents or the Board? It appears that the project is underway, and we are told that we have a voice; but if the voice is to no avail, what good is it? She also shared that in her case, the real estate agent she had dealt with had said that there were no proximity issues.

5.2.1 Chair responded that the previous Bellevue project proposal had consisted of 32 units on a 3.5 acre piece of land; further, it had intended to connect Bellevue to Alpine so that the road would go all the way through; these factors were sufficient to cause significant pushback that delayed the project; the current goal is to put up just 3 homes.

5.2.2 Jim added that the Veteran project had been moved to Bellevue for no reason other than it had run into an unexpected Title snag that would take time to resolve. As mentioned, it consists only of 3 houses with a total of 12 units; no office or admin space is needed

5.2.3 Pete noted that the piece of property in question had been dedicated and set aside for affordable housing since the early nineties; he did not expect that it would need to go to Town Meeting; the objective has always been clear and approved.

Pete also pointed out that the challenge is really a consensus issue – to come up with a model that works for all parties. Jim added that too often it is oversimplified as a matter of the Vineyard’s housing needs versus resident’s concerns. He invited Linda to join his Veterans Committee so she could be a part of the decision-making process. No response noted.

5.3 Chair also added that Skip Finley had sent AHC’s notice of meeting to the Tower Ridge Association Chair; AHC Chair would make a point of reaching out. He stressed that the Committee wants to bring all of the neighbors on board as sources of input on all pertinent issues.

6. Member Updates

6.1 Katie: continues to work on the Nitrogen Credit process.

6.2 Jim: asked about the ‘protected habitat’ aspect in the Southern Tier area.

Chair responded that while there was no ‘threatened species’ in the vicinity there is a moth that lives there and specific plans are needed, which they are working on.

6.3 Pete shared his frustrations about project hands on viability, as opposed to what he’s seen happening with an Edgartown project; they had their permits in hand, they moved forward as intended; we have been somewhat hamstrung by the permitting process, so that our ability to have a say in what matters has been curtailed, and we now have the possibility of competition in a neighboring project which proposes a single giant 52 apartment building.

6.4 Jim reiterated his concerns about excessive building costs, and suggested that Philippe Jordi should attend the next AHC meeting; he also referred to David’s views on IHT’s building style and costs and the building materials used; and he had a question about solar panels at Scotts Grove – what difference have these made?

7. Public Comment

7.1 David noted that Philippe had switched horses from DHCD to TCB, The Community Builders, in the selection of building management. Be that as it may, he nevertheless felt that IHT did a good job of keeping maintenance costs down and their buildings were well maintained; he also referred to tax credit arrangements they might use, which could be traded back to cover other costs.

Chair noted that it was IHT dollars here and they decided what worked best for them.

8. Adjournment

There being no other issues before the Committee, Chair looked to a proposal for adjournment; so proposed by Jim Bishop and seconded by Katherine Donahue, with all members present being in favor. Chair Mark Leonard accordingly declared the meeting adjourned.

R G Eli, Secretary

Affordable Housing Committee

Town of Oak Bluffs