



DANVERS AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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Minutes August 13, 2015

Danvers Affordable Housing Trust: Gardner Trask, Don Gates, Sally Calhoun, Stacey Bernson, John Alden, Carla King and Tish Lentine

Staff: Susan Fletcher and Francine Butler

Minutes of June 17, 2015

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to approve the minutes of June 17, 2015.

20 Locust Street ZBA Application

Trask told the Board that he saw the property located at 20 Locust Street on the ZBA agenda, and he asked the Board what message the Trust wanted to send to the ZBA. He pointed out the documents regarding the application for mixed-use on the first floor with apartments on the 2nd and 3rd floors. The applicant is planning on using the parking lot across the street for their parking needs. The application does not include any affordable units at this time.

Gates asked if these residential units were going to be apartments or condominiums. Fletcher responded that she thought they would be apartments, but this may not have been decided yet. Trask felt this may be a decision driven by the market.

Fletcher pointed out that the variance goes with the land as well as the structure. She passed out the definition of a variance to the Board, so they would have the framework for what the law says.

Trask said that he felt the Trust should send a letter to the ZBA. If the multi-family zoning bylaw requirements were applied, there would be three affordable units included in the development. He would like the Trust's opinion. Trask stated that Attorney McCann has avoided this issue until pressed for it.

Gates said that with the affordable rates being so high, it is economically feasible for the developer to do this. Trask agreed. The Trust is looking for the developer to supplement affordable units, not give them up. Gates said whether the developer converts with or without affordable units, the site will be better than what the building is now.

Fletcher said that the applicant's wife is interested in opening a bakery on the first floor.

Alden said that the Board has a responsibility to the Trust and Town to make a stance that affordable units need to be provided. If not, he felt they would be taking steps backwards. He said that they did the Housing Production Plan to plan for these potentials, and they need to take a stance.

Fletcher thought it was good to bring up the Housing Production Plan (HPP) in order to tie it to a plan adopted by the Board of Selectmen as policy for the Town.

Alden said he would prefer to get the units on-site rather than off-site. He felt it was a perfect location.

Calhoun felt the site fit all the criteria they were looking for.

Fletcher felt the location was close to the bus line and the downtown where groceries could be purchased. Also, jobs could be found, and children could walk to school.

Trask said that they wanted affordable housing downtown.

Fletcher pointed out that this would be a mixed-use building. People who worked there would only be there until 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Gates said that people would leave for the day for commercial activity to happen, and then return when the commercial activity was over.

Trask pointed out that they were not picking at the plan. The Trust did not care about the logistics of the plan. Even though the Town is over the 10% threshold, Trask stated that the Trust was created to increase the Town's affordable housing units.

Calhoun felt there was a need for three-bedroom units and asked if they could request three-bedroom units. Calhoun confirmed that these were going to be one and two-bedroom units. It was noted that since the design is for one and two bedroom units, including three bedroom units would affect the design and number of units in the project.

Trask felt it was the Trust's charge to comment at the ZBA meeting.

Alden said that this project was going before the ZBA. He confirmed that the Planning Board and ZBA did not have to include the Trust in their decision. Trask confirmed this.

Trask asked if the variance could come with conditions. Fletcher responded yes, but said that they can be appealed. The ZBA could say to the applicant that they should wait until the downtown zoning changes are voted by Town Meeting. Trask added that the ZBA can deny the application.

Alden said that the Jones Boys project was a special permit. Fletcher said that this application is requesting a variance from zoning.

Fletcher pointed out that they were asking for what was already in the zoning for the multi-family zoning. Calhoun asked why this did not apply, and Fletcher responded because the zoning only applied to multi-family zoning districts.

Alden asked if there were other variances or special permits on Maple Street already. Fletcher confirmed this.

Trask said that he drafted the language for the letter that would have just come from him. He felt if the letter came from the Board, it would be more effective. He asked the Board for their comments. Trask said if the applicant was denied, they could come to the Trust for a friendly 40B.

A discussion ensued concerning edits to the letter to be presented to the ZBA by the Trust.

Trask said that they were not against mixed use. The Planning Board did not vote to accept this project. They did participate in the site visit. Fletcher said that the Planning Board did a site visit and liked the design. They did ask about affordable housing units being included.

Calhoun felt this project was gathering a lot of support. She felt it was a positive project.

Trask asked if the affordable rental rates should be reflected in the letter. Gates said that they did not know whether these units were going to be rentals or condos. Calhoun felt that they did not need to include that level of detail.

Trask pointed out that the Trust was not asking the applicant to give away an apartment.

Alden said that the Trust would be willing to work with the developer relative to the fees.

Gates felt they should not offer until they are asked. Trask said that there is a sentence in the letter that said that we are willing to work with the applicant. We want to let them know that we are open and amenable and have done this before.

Calhoun wants to say that the Board of Selectmen has adopted a policy for affordable housing. She felt this was a great opportunity for this Trust to shine in a positive role in a positive project.

Fletcher said that the letter needed to be delivered to the Building Inspector tomorrow. She will forward a copy to King and Trask.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to draft a letter from the Trust to the ZBA.

Fletcher said she would get them the ZBA agenda to see where this item was on the agenda.

Financial Report

Trask asked if there were any questions concerning the financial report.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to accept the financial report.

Fletcher said if the applicant for 20 Locust Street would want to meet with the Trust, they would have a meeting next Wednesday. If not, the meeting would be cancelled.

New Business

Fletcher asked the Board if they would like to invite anyone to the next meeting.

Updates

Trask asked how the Coolidge property was going. Fletcher said she would check on the status.

Fletcher asked the Board if there was anything specific they wanted to discuss in September.

Trask asked legal counsel about the Trust being able to help with rental assistance. They can do this, and he suggested discussing this topic at the next meeting. They can discuss how they want to structure and support that mechanism.

Alden asked if they needed to have Community Council come in to discuss how the Trust could help them. Gates said they would be amenable to any conditions.

Alden said that the Mariner's Point project at the end of River Street is finalizing the exterior of the last building, and they would be looking for occupancy permits on the last two units.

Fletcher said that they completed the selection process for one of the units at the Venice Street project. The selection for the second unit fell through. Fletcher said she would check on the status.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Tish Lentine
Clerk