

Housing Coalition  
(Housing Commission, Affordable Housing Trust  
and Lincoln Foundation)  
Regular Meeting Minutes on Zoom  
February 10, 2022, 7:30 AM

Affordable Housing Trust Members: James Craig, Co-Chair, George Georges, Co-Chair, Evan Gorman, Terri Morgan and Ellen Myer Shorb

Housing Commission Members: Allen Vander Meulen, Chair, Evan Gorman, Co-Chair, and Rachel Drew

Lincoln Foundation Member: Terri Morgan, Pres., Vicki Braithwaite and Rhonda Swain

*(Members not available: AHT: B-J Scheff; HC: Victoria Benalfew and Rakesh Karmacharya)*

Others Present: Elizabeth Rust, RHSO; and Elaine Carroll, Adm. Assistant

The meeting started at 7:30 am. with a determination that there were quorums for all of the boards.

### **Sale of Affordable Units at Battle Road Farm:**

Terri Morgan said the problems with selling the affordable units are the high condo fees, aging units not updated and some not in good repair, which makes them harder to sell. There are also special assessments which can be a burden on homeowners especially if their income has not increased. This could make it hard for them to continue to live there. Some units have deed restrictions that set their price much higher, and these are the ones we had decided to buy down. We have not been doing that recently because it seems like a lot of money and does not solve the other problems for the units. We have decided in some cases to market to 100% to 120% buyers who can actually afford to live there. Lincoln Foundation members have been trying to come up with some ideas to solve the problem. They are working with MCO Realty which is an affordable housing realtor. They work with the owners and can advertise on MLS to reach a broader audience of middle income buyers. A couple of units did not sell and one owner, after the time frame for the affordable sale, sold it to a friend who was a developer. He remodeled the whole unit and now rents it out. The other unit has not sold yet. James Craig asked Liz Rust what other towns do with affordable ownership units, which can be more challenging. Liz said it is a general problem, but it is more acute in Lincoln because of the large number of older units like Battle Road Farm. Minuteman Commons is a bit different because of the septic issue there. Terri said there are more units going on the market in the last few years because people who have owned their units for a long time are moving to other states or a retirement place. Liz put together a list of the units for sale from 2019 going forward. They are all a little bit specific in terms of the details and what happens and also the AMI levels. The last unit that had a buydown by the Town was back in August of 2019. James said that was about the time the Trust used \$1 million to invest in Oriole Landing. The concern was since the unit does not fall off the SHI and the cost to buy down a unit at about \$50,000 to \$60,000 is costly. We need to replenish the funds that the Trust has spent. The question is does the group want to reconsider this on a case-by-case basis.

### **Discussion of Affordable Housing Opportunities for Lincoln Based Organizations:**

Allen Vander Meulen said the Housing Commission has an alternative proposal for condos that do not sell. There are some organizations in Town desperate to find housing for their employees, such as Codman Farm and possibly Drumlin Farm and the Food Project along with others. Codman is willing to invest in purchasing units and refurbishing them for their employees or they may lose them. Instead of doing a buydown we should facilitate the purchase by these organizations. We then preserve the spirit of the units being affordable. Liz said you would have to buy it once it is available on the open market. They would not be eligible during the restricted marketing period. They would need to wait out the time frame even if you think you will not have any qualified buyers. The unit would still be counted on the SHI even if it was not an affordable buyer. James asked what type of incentives we would offer one of these organizations. Allen said we could assist the buyer and get a lien on the property, assist in the repairs or something like a buydown on the property. Liz said the

inducement is that it is still an affordable price, which means it is already discounted. Liz said the seller would get the restricted price and if they sell for market price, the difference goes to the Town. The seller has no incentive to sell it higher since they only get the restricted price. Because of the clause in the deed rider for this development that makes them unaffordable at resale, DHCD made an exception so everyone under the homeowner program (HOP) is grandfathered on the SHI forever. James suggested inviting some of these organizations to a future Housing Coalition meeting to do some brainstorming as a starting point to figure out a path forward.

James asked Terri for an update on the grant program at Battle Road Farm. Terri said we offered it last spring for up to a \$5,000 secured loan. They needed to show us what needed to be done with the bids for the work. So far a kitchen renovation and HVAC replacement have been completed with another one in process and one more waiting to get bids. She feels like the program was very successful. The work really needed to be done and the owners were at 80% or below for income. There is more need out there and we have enough money to do another round of grants. James said should the Housing Trust set aside a certain amount of money, which we may not recoup, but we need to be sensitive to how much we can reasonably allocate or do it one time. If we set aside \$60,000 is \$10,000 or \$12,000 enough to make a difference. George said that a small kitchen or bathroom renovation could cost \$15,000 or \$20,000. We could assist three or four units instead of buying down one unit. Liz said if using CPA funds, it would have to be 100% or lower for income. James said the next step would be to have a Housing Trust meeting to evaluate our current financial situation, and what we think would be a reasonable amount to set aside. Liz said there is another unit about to go back on the market and the owner had another appraisal, which came back \$100,000 higher. The owner needs to go through the DHCD process and if it does not sell, the decision has to be made to either go with MCO Housing to sell it to a moderate income buyer or go another route. The decision will need to come within the next month. Allan will reach out to the organizations and invite them to a Housing Coalition meeting.

### **Update on the results of the Septic Study at Lincoln Woods:**

James said he and Rachel are on SLPAC and we just had the existing treatment plant evaluated on the current conditions of the plant including capacity, any room for expansion and what that cost would be. This gives us an idea of what is possible for the area in terms of additional units over time. The report is available on the SLPAC page. Currently the system is permitted to service about 26,000 gallons per day (gpd) and they currently use 17,000 gpd, which leaves 9,000 gpd expansion just on the current system, which would cost the Town less than \$100,000 to get that additional service in terms of fixing some existing items and that would give us an additional 72 bedrooms in the area. We could do some work on the treatment plant at a cost of \$1.5 million and it would get us up to about 40,000 gpd maximum limit. That would increase our expansion potential to 199 bedrooms for the area. It is done by bedroom count so we could have 100 two-bedroom units possible for \$1.5 million. After that it jumps in price. If you want 50,000 gpd the cost jumps to about \$5.8 million and that would get us another 90 bedrooms. The last the study did was 60,000 gpd for a potential of 381 bedrooms for almost \$7 million. The Housing Choice Act is setting a minimum standard for towns to add 700 or 750 units of housing.

Rachel said we do not have to develop them, but we need to have a zoned part of Town within a half mile of the train station that could allow up to 750 units or 15 units per acre but that is before accounting for wetlands or other restrictions. You can consider units already there. It could potentially mean the Town has to decide between zoning for a significant increase in units over a small area or risk losing eligibility for certain large state grants. James said the state has put in a time frame for towns to provide their comments and responses. For some reason, they have listed Lincoln as in the bus category and not as a commuter rail town. Rachel said the town has until March 31 to draft a response and she has been working with a sub-group within SLPAC to draft our response. James asked if the Housing Coalition would receive a copy of the draft to look at. She asked Paula Vaughn if she could share it with the Housing Coalition and she agreed so feels that she could send it out to the Housing Coalition. Rachel said there is a meeting with the Select Board, Planning Board and SLPAC on February 28 to discuss comments on the draft and it is an open meeting that anyone can attend. The

town has significant capacity restrictions mostly for water and wastewater that would make allowing a large number of units in town challenging. The idea is that this is a zoning proposal for these units, and they would not necessarily appear even over an extended period of time. If we were to build out to the maximum capacity it would mean a major strain on Lincoln's systems without some external opportunity to significantly upgrade those systems. Would such funds be available from the grant program, and would we be eligible to apply for them? The idea of 750 units would be a 30% increase in the number of housing units, which would be an unrealistic minimum standard to set not just for Lincoln but for 42% of the towns that are now subject to this Housing Choice Act. Could we ask if there is some flexibility regarding the minimum number of units and also over a larger area rather than clustering them into a small district by the train station, which has wetlands and conservation restrictions. James said there is a lot to consider, but at least we understand where the septic treatment plant currently is and what the potential is, which is really helpful.

**Minutes:**

Allen Vander Meulen made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 23, 2021 meeting as written. Terri Morgan seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Allen Vander Meulen-aye; Terri Morgan-aye; George Georges-aye; Rachel Drew-aye; Ellen Myer Shorb-aye; Evan Gorman; Rhonda Swain; Vicki Braithwaite-aye; James Craig-aye.

At 8:30 a.m. Terri Morgan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rachel Drew seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Allen Vander Meulen-aye; Terri Morgan-aye; George Georges-aye; Rachel Drew-aye; Ellen Myer Shorb-aye; Evan Gorman; Rhonda Swain; Vicki Braithwaite-aye; James Craig-aye.

*Submitted by Elaine Carroll*

*Approved: September 20, 2022*