

**Lincoln Housing Commission  
Virtual Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 7:00 p.m.**

**Members Present on Zoom Teleconference: Allen Vander Meulen, Chair; Evan Gorman, Vice Chair; Victoria Benalfew; Rachel Drew; Keith Gilbert.**

Not Present: Elaine Carroll, Housing Commission Administrative Assistant.

The meeting was called to order at 7:13 p.m. by Allen Vander Meulen.

Allen mentioned at the start of the meeting that we are required to take and complete the “Conflict of Interest” online tutorial as recently announced by Valerie Fox, Town Clerk.

## **26 Sunnyside Discussion**

Victoria reported that she and Abigail Butt (COA Director) met with the tenant regarding her husband status. She was agreeable to removing her husband from the lease as long as this did not preclude her husband from staying with her from time to time. (A review of the lease agreement determined that he could have been unilaterally removed from the lease by the Commission anyway, since he is there less than 9 months in any 12 month period.)

*(COA Director Abigail Butt joined the meeting at this point.)*

After much discussion and in light of the commitment already made to her, the commission agreed to remove her husband from the lease but allow him to visit without a restriction in terms of how long or how often he can stay. For legal reasons, the commission determined that the husband will have to go back on the lease should he make the apartment his legal or permanent residence.

Abigail then noted that there are more cars parked in the shared lot there than parking spaces for them: two of the vehicles are parked in the grass; and two of the vehicles have no plates – one of which is clearly not in drivable condition. Allen responded by saying the commission investigated this issue recently, but had no language in its lease to allow removal of vehicles from the lot, nor is there any language in the town’s bylaws to allow for removal of illegally parked vehicles from the property. This has been corrected in the lease that we will begin using with the next round of recertifications this coming Spring or early Summer.

Abigail stated that the tenants may not have the knowledge or the ability to dispose of unwanted vehicles, and so offered the COA’s assistance in helping tenants dispose of the vehicles. This could be a source of some income for a tenant (if they junk or sell it); and may be helpful if there are other issues – such as missing titles, etc. A quick check with Gerry O’Doherty confirmed that all of the vehicles currently in the lot are associated with the current tenants.

Allen asked Abigail if she needs to create a presentation about the Rental Assistance Program for Town Meeting. Abigail said she had been told she had to (which is also Allen’s understanding); but that she is not sure what sort of presentation needs to be made, or who (the CPC, Housing Commission or the COA) should be involved on creating and presenting this. Allen will email Eric and Peggy Elder for more guidance as to what we (and the COA) should be doing for this.

## **Affordable Accessory Apartment (AAA) Program**

Abigail noted that the city of Salem has decided to use Lincoln's Accessory Apartment Model, including the AAA, as a model for their own Accessory Dwelling Unit program. (They did not have provision for Accessory Apartments in their zoning Bylaws before now.)

### **Planning Board Affordable Accessory Apartment Changes Endorsement**

Allen added that the Planning Board is proposing several changes to town's current Accessory Apartment (AA) Bylaw, including removing the requirement that an AA cannot be created until a new home is at least ten years old, and capping the number of AA's at 5% of the town's entire housing stock. Although Allen believes that AAA's are NOT counted towards that 5% cap. Allen then said that Paula Vaughn had sent an email this morning, asking that the Housing Commission to endorse these proposed changes in advance of the May 15<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting.

Rachel Drew moved we endorse the Planning Board's proposed changes, Keith Gilbert seconded the motion. Roll Call: Victoria Benalfew-aye; Rachel Drew-aye; Keith Gilbert-aye; Evan Gorman-aye; Allen Vander Meulen-aye. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Revisions to the Tenant Manual**

Allen reviewed his list of changes that seem to be needed for the tenant manual:

- Need to add the "Dog Policy" the Commission approved two or three years ago.
- Need to add the upcoming "Car Policy."
- Some references to the company that tenants should call in case of maintenance needs must to be updated to reflect that Gerry O'Doherty is now our maintenance manager.

Rachel noted that Elaine has already updated the manual to reflect the maintenance manager changes.

Allen will revise the manual to include the new policies and any other necessary changes he identifies, then send it around for comment before we vote to approve the revisions at a future meeting.

### **Status Reports**

#### **Housing Trust (Keith)**

A Housing Trust meeting is scheduled for 5/6 regarding the proposed new Lincoln Trust grant program. At that meeting, if it is not already on the agenda, Keith will repeat the HC's request for confirmation from the Housing Trust for the \$125K AAA Grant program's funding.

Allen also mentioned that he has discussed with James Craig his concerns regarding the amount of Affordable Housing-related expenditures being made from CPC funds to support the Rental Assistance Program and the RHSO, and how this is being done. To Allen it seems that there is a procedural gap, since no one thought to involve the Housing Trust or secure its endorsement for either CPC application this year, which impacts the amount of money the HT will have at its disposal for future Housing-related needs. We need to have a discussion with the CPC and HT to make sure we all agree on the proper procedure for requesting funds from the CPC for Housing-related purposes.

Following this was a discussion about the long-term funding of programs through the CPC, which the CPC has concerns about funding in the long term. As they see it, this is not in line with their mission. They are certainly

supportive of these needs, but the feeling is that there will be more and more pushback from CPC members in future years if alternative funding is not found.

Rachel said that in her discussion with Tim Higgins, it seems that other funding sources are not available, meaning that funding cease if the CPC eventually decides to not fund these programs, or if the CPC has insufficient funds (due to other, more pressing, needs).

Rachel and Abigail both agreed that there may be avenues for ongoing funding, especially if we can partner with organizations with sufficient size, expertise, and connections, to help us. Abigail said we should approach Liz Rust of the RHSO about this, since she has some experience in this area, and knowledge of what other communities and organizations are doing. We will discuss this with her at her next meeting with us, which should be in our May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Allen suggested that at our next meeting we can initiate some sort of inquiry into how to find other funding sources for affordable housing that Lincoln can take advantage-of for these and other efforts here in town. In the meantime, we should devote some thought as to what our specific goal(s) should be, and how to structure an initial inquiry into this.

It was also mentioned that we should approach Oriole Landing's owner (Civico) as to what whether all of their Affordable Units have tenants yet, and what we can do to help them fill any remaining vacancies. Allen will reach out to Civico about this, since he got to know them fairly well during the effort to get Oriole Landing approved at the 2018 Town Meeting. Abigail also asked Allen help her identify the point person at Oriole Landing for the COA to coordinate with regarding tenant assistance.

#### SLPAC (Rachel)

Rachel talked about how the new Housing Choice Law is impacting SLPAC's work. It is well known that many aspects of the law are ill-defined or undefined, and will require new regulations and rulings from the DHCD to be actionable; and for Lincoln to decide how best to respond to the new law. Significant opportunities to apply for grant money will be impacted if Lincoln does not comply with the new law, once those issues are addressed by the DHCD. This will take a while, and the DHCD has said that in the meantime every town is considered to be in compliance. So, there is not much for SLPAC to do at this time with regards to the new law; and some question as to what can or should be done regarding efforts to improve zoning in the Lincoln Station area until the DHCD provides more guidance. There are also some unresolved questions in terms of what portions of the Lincoln Station area should be included in SLPAC's purview (or not).

In Rachel's opinion, given the current uncertainties, and given the amount of concern being raised by those with some stake or interest in the area, the likelihood is that nothing will happen in terms of new projects or zoning changes in the Lincoln Station area until the DHCD weighs in on how this law will be enacted in Lincoln's case.

Rachel also reported that the town is moving forward on an RFP for an engineering study of the Wastewater Treatment plant owned by Lincoln Woods, to determine current status, cost of replacement, and the cost of possible expansion scenarios to better support the town's long term goals for the Lincoln Station area.

#### COA (Victoria)

Victoria reported that there is no activity on the COA that would impact the Housing Commissions' work. (Abigail concurred.)

#### CPC (Evan)

Evan reported that the CPC is done for the year, all of the requests made have been approved by the CPC and will be on the warrant for approval at the 2021 Town Meeting.

#### Maintenance (Evan)

Evan reports no new issues, the recent mice-related repairs at 75 Tower are done and appear to be satisfactory.

#### Finances (Allen)

Allen reports that although he has not reviewed the most recent financial report for the Housing Commission's revolving fund, the fund's balance has been quite healthy. This is good, but may mean that there are likely some long term maintenance needs and/or improvements that should be done, such as the kitchen remodel at 26 Sunnyside. He added that major work is often done after a tenant leaves, before a new tenant moves in – and the last such tenant change resulted in the remodel of 75 Tower Road in about 2014, and addition of a second apartment there.

#### Lincoln Trust (Battle Road Farm) Grant Program

This was the central issue of the recent "Housing Coalition Meeting" which all HC members attended. Abigail mentioned that the Housing Trust is looking for ways to provide additional funding for the program, which might include selling an existing Affordable Unit at market rate and so causing it to be lost from the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory. Allen expressed some concerns about this, as there should be some sort of approvals from town bodies, including probably the Board of Selects and the Housing Commission, before this is done. Abigail also noted that Liz Rust of RHSO knows how to do such a sale this properly from a DHCD perspective, but this is not relevant in terms of whether the Town agrees this is something the Lincoln Trust can be allowed to do.

#### **Minutes:**

Evan Gorman moved we approve the Housing Commission's March 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting minutes as written. Keith Gilbert seconded the motion. Roll Call: Victoria Benalfew-aye; Rachel Drew-aye; Keith Gilbert-aye; Evan Gorman-aye; Allen Vander Meulen-aye. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Other Business:**

The next regular Housing Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm. We will be inviting the RHSO to report at this next meeting.

Victoria moved to adjourn. Evan seconded. Roll Call: Diana - aye, Victoria - aye, Evan Gorman - aye; Keith - aye; Allen - aye. The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.