

Stoneham Municipal Affordable Housing Trust
Tuesday January 21, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees: Mary Shannon Thomas, Elizabeth Cleveland, Laura Cronin, Connie Pascale, and Erin Wortman (a non-voting participant)

Elizabeth Cleveland was asked to take notes for the meeting minutes.

There was a roll call vote to begin the meeting.

Connie Pascale introduced himself as the newest Trust member. He stated that he moved to Stoneham from New Jersey in 2022. His career was in legal services and poverty law for low-income populations, and he also worked in affordable housing.

Mary Shannon Thomas, Elizabeth Cleveland, Laura Cronin, and Erin Wortman did introductions as well.

Initial meeting business involved a quick discussion of meeting minutes. Mary Shannon proposed, and the other Trustees agreed, that the December 2024 and January 2025 meeting minutes would be approved at the February 2025 meeting.

The next meeting date was proposed to be either 2/18/25 or 2/25/25. Mary Shannon was going to send a Doodle Poll out to all Trustees to determine the best date, since Paulette and Raymie were not in attendance. It was agreed upon by the Trustees present that the cadence for future meetings will likely be the 3rd Tuesday of the month, so tentatively March 18th, April 15th, and May 20th. This will be confirmed by the group at the February meeting.

Given Ayman's sparse participation in the Trust, and the need to have engaged members to help accomplish the mission, the Trustees agreed that the group would request his resignation. The Trustees would like to encourage him to either participate moving forward in a non-voting role or work on one of the committees. Mary Shannon and Elizabeth Cleveland will draft and email to send to him.

There were a few updates by Erin Wortman from the Town:

- 1) The Town will procure a consultant to update the Housing Production Plan from the one that was originally done 5 years ago. The Town is required to get 3 bids, and all of the work associated with the contract will need to be completed by 6/30/26.
- 2) The Town met with the development group for the old hospital site, since the prior lawsuit was dismissed. Demolition and remediation of the site will be about 18 months long, since there are offices and residents at the location and nearby vicinity. The housing project will include 375 rental units, of which 25% will be affordable.
- 3) The 95 Maple, Weiss Farm, and Hospital site projects will all accept low-income vouchers, but it is very difficult to do project-based vouchers.

- 4) The Town is having conversations to see there can be any incentives for future housing units to have an ownership options. Elizabeth Cleveland asked if there will be any ownership options in the proposed large developments, and Erin Wortman stated that they will be all rental units. Given the economics around developing these projects, and the potential rental income, developers are less inclined to do ownership options because they would make less money.

Mary Shannon suggested the need to develop an FAQ to help the community better understand what affordable housing is and is not, and the group agreed this should be a priority. Elizabeth Cleveland suggested putting together some infographics and possibly considering a social media campaign. Connie Pascal also showed examples of flyers he helped developed in his prior work to better explain affordable housing, which the group agreed could include some good strategies for getting the word out in Stoneham.

Given that the Trust does not yet have any money, the group agreed that the working group focused on education and outreach of affordable housing should be the initial priority. It was determined that the working group could include non-Trust members, but any working group meetings would need to follow open meeting laws. As such, the meeting would need to be posted on the Town website at least 72 hours in advance of any working group meeting. The group thought it might make sense to have the meeting on a Saturday or Sunday, and a doodle poll was determined to be the best tool to try and schedule something.

Mary Shannon notified the group that she received an email from the Town stating that the Trust needs to submit an annual report by the end of February on what the Trust has accomplished. Mary Shannon will draft a submission and send it to the group for review.

Mary Shannon also initiated that the Town's budget challenges may lead people to wonder whether any funding going to the Trust could be used for other budgetary purposes. She stated that there could be questions around whether the funding could help to subsidize senior residents' property taxes. The group agreed that while the budget issue is somewhat ancillary to the Trust, that the group should continue to understand what is going on, since it could have implications to future Trust work.

The meeting ended with a roll call vote by the Trustees.