

CAMBRIDGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST
MEETING MINUTES
August 1, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

Conducted via Zoom and in person (City Hall, Ackermann Room)

Trustees Present in Person: Yi-An Huang, Chair; Teresa Cardosi, Raffi Freeman

Trustees Present via Zoom: Alyson Stein, Jim Stockard, Susan Schlesinger

Trustees Absent: Krissandra Robinson, Elaine DeRosa, Elaine Thorne

Staff Present: Chris Cotter, Housing Director; Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development; Cassie Arnaud, Senior Manager for Housing Development; Janet Haines, Housing Planner; Christine Yu, Associate Housing Development Planner; Anna Dolmatch, Senior Manager for Homeownership

Others Present: Sue Reinert, Madeline Lee, Andarge Nuguse, Kent He, J. Hannon, Federico Muchnik, Noah Sawyer, Matthew Robayna, Patrick Hayes, Helen Walker, James Williamson, Miriam Reid, Heather Hoffman

The meeting was called to order at 4:27 p.m. Mr. Cotter explained that this meeting of the Affordable Housing Trust was delayed due to technical issues and would be held in a hybrid fashion pursuant to applicable requirements, that all votes would be taken by roll call. He then confirmed via roll call that each remote participant could hear the meeting and was audible to others.

Prior to starting the meeting, in response to a request from the public to have introductions, staff and the Trust introduced themselves.

MEETING MINUTES

Upon a motion moved and seconded, by roll call of six in favor and three absent (Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeRosa, and Ms. Thorne), it was voted to approve the minutes for the meeting of June 25, 2024.

HOUSING DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Jefferson Park Federal: Construction closing of JP Federal completed in July 2024 and construction on the site has begun.

Rindge Commons: Rindge Commons is now fully occupied. Staff are reviewing a funding request for the second phase of this project.

35 Harvey Street: Renovations are expected to wrap up by the end of August.

16-18 Wendell Street: The Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) purchased 16-18 Wendell at the beginning of July using Trust funding. The CHA will be making modest upgrades to the interior before leasing up the property as permanent supportive housing.

OTHER UPDATES:

Incentive Zoning: The Trust received a \$2.8 million contribution in incentive zoning funds from the development on Smith Place.

Multi-Family Zoning: The Housing Committee held a meeting on multi-family zoning on July 17th where staff talked about the zoning framework and received public comments on the approach. The next meeting is scheduled for August 21st.

Public Comment

Mr. Cotter noted the many written public comments received regarding Walden Square II development and recommended that the Trust open the meeting to public comment with several attendees wanting to provide comments as well. In response to a question regarding how long the public had to provide comments, it was agreed upon that people would have two minutes to speak.

Upon a motion moved, seconded, and approved by roll call six in favor and three absent (Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeRosa, and Ms. Thorne), it was:

VOTED: to open the meeting to Public Comment.

Eve Sullivan commented that she provided public feedback electronically to the Trust.

Federico Muchnik commented that there are technical questions regarding Walden Square that need to be resolved. He advised Winn to reconsider the design and to look at the third design that he proposed as an alternative.

James Williamson thanked the Trust for allowing people to provide public comments. He is not in favor of the proposed Walden Square plans. He spoke to people in the existing Walden Square apartments, who he notes are also not in favor. He believes this plan will have a negative impact on the community and open space.

Heather Hoffman commented that the community was lied to about the Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO). She states that the community was lied to because the Trust is supposed vet projects for the community has not done so in the case of Walden Square.

Upon a motion moved, seconded, and approved by roll call six in favor and three absent (Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeRosa, and Ms. Thorne), it was:

VOTED: to close Public Comment.

NEW BUSINESS

Walden Square II AHO Planning Board Report

Mr. Cotter informed the Trust that Winn Development's Walden Square II development has completed the AHO advisory design review process. The Planning Board issued its final AHO advisory design report on July 22nd after the second of two required advisory design consultations was held on July 2nd. The Board noted positive changes in the façade of both proposed buildings but agreed that the project could benefit from continued design consultation with CDD and other City staff, specifically around circulation, façade, landscaping, and bicycle parking. Mr. Cotter said that staff would be working with Winn to respond to the design comments outlined in the report and recommended that the Trust postpone its acceptance of the report as staff works with Winn to address these concerns. Staff can then update the Trust with information about Winn's responses to the comments in the Board's final report. One condition of the Trust's funding commitment for this development is the Trust's review and acceptance of the AHO final design report.

Trustees expressed concern over delaying the project. In response to a question regarding what impact of having a delay would be, staff responded that it depends on how quickly Winn is able to respond to the comments. Staff noted that Winn has expressed its desire to be as responsive as possible, so the Trust could see changes as early as the September meeting, but it could also be later in the fall. It is possible that Winn will change their plans as they work on addressing the concerns around circulation, façade, and open space. Ms. Cardosi commented that she was concerned about Winn potentially losing funding due to delays, to which Mr. Cotter responded that delays would also add to costs and uncertainty.

Ms. Schlesinger commented that she listened to the Planning Board meeting and read everything about the project. She recommended that Winn should focus on the Planning Board suggestions, and that additional mature trees and what to do about the private driveway should be explored. She noted that when the project first came to the Trust in 2022, the Trust asked for Winn to make a range of changes, including increasing the number of family-sized units, which they did, before the project was put on pause due to the concerns about Winn's management. Winn worked to address those concerns, and the Trust was willing to consider the funding request when they heard of positive changes to the management. It was noted that the Councillor Siddiqui attended the last Trust meeting and confirmed that things were improved at Walden Square I. Ms. Schlesinger emphasized the need to keep this project moving while also making the designs right.

Mr. Stockard agreed with Ms. Schlesinger's comments. He said he thought that the Trust should wait for Winn's response to the Planning Board report before accepting the report as that is the most appropriate thing to do in this situation. Chair Huang added that there has been a lot of public feedback, which is part of how the AHO process works.

The Planning Board Design Review Final Report on Walden Square II will be held until further changes are made; no vote was taken.

49 6th Street Funding Request

Mr. Cotter presented a funding request from the Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) for an additional \$500,000 to assist in the construction of 46 new affordable rental units at 49 6th Street in East Cambridge. The Trust committed \$10,750,000 to POAH in March 2024, with the understanding that that was the last major piece of funding needed to move the development forward. However, limitations with bond volume caps at the state level has required a different approach to fund this development. In response to the changing funding environment, POAH worked on finding a new solution to allow them to close and begin construction by the end of this year.

The new plan is that the \$16,624,666 in 4% Federal LIHTC will be replaced by approximately \$5 million in 9% Federal LIHTC and \$10.1 million in State LIHTC. POAH has also been able to increase their permanent debt by approximately \$1 million based on updated rents for project-based vouchers and MRVPs. An additional \$500,000 request from the Trust would bring the total Trust commitment to \$11,250,000 or \$244,565 per unit.

Ms. Schlesinger commented that POAH has been creative with switching their funding given the challenges with funding at the state.

Upon a motion moved, seconded, and approved by roll call of six in favor and three absent (Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeRosa, and Ms. Thorne), it was:

VOTED: to approve the Trust funding request of up to \$500,000 from POAH for 49 6th Street and to convert the \$10,750,000 already committed in short-term funding to a single permanent loan of \$11,250,000 at construction closing, all as further described in the meeting materials.

28-30 Wendell Street Funding Commitments

Mr. Cotter presented a request to the Trust to authorize Homeowners Rehab Inc. (HRI) to use its remaining predevelopment funds from 30 Wendell Street for 28 Wendell Street. In August 2023, the Trust approved up to \$5,700,000 for the acquisition of 30 Wendell Street by HRI, as well as \$657,000 in predevelopment funds for this development.

Since then, HRI purchased the adjacent property at 28 Wendell Street and plans on combining the two properties into one Affordable Housing Overlay project. HRI has already drawn on predevelopment funding for early development costs related to 30 Wendell Street and would like the remaining funds to be available for predevelopment work related to the combined 28 and 30 Wendell Street development.

Upon a motion moved, seconded, and approved by roll call of six in favor and three absent (Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeRosa, and Ms. Thorne), it was:

VOTED: to authorize HRI to use 30 Wendell Street predevelopment funds for predevelopment work related to 28 Wendell Street.

35 Cherry Street Preliminary Designs

Mr. Cotter updated the Trust on the status of the development of 35 Cherry Street. JAS's preliminary proposal has three three-story buildings with a total of ten family-sized homeownership units. Units include three two-bedroom duplexes; three two-bedroom flats, and four three-bedroom flats. The design has minimal shared systems to simplify long-term maintenance for owners.

Ms. Dolmatch added that the preliminary designs have been shared at JAS's last AHO community meeting. The next AHO meeting is August 21st. JAS will also be meeting with CDD staff to discuss the designs, so this will not be the last time that Trust will see and comment on the designs. The proposed units will meet the Homeownership Livability Standards included in the RFP that came out of a two-year community process.

In response to a question by Mr. Freeman regarding whether the project could be bigger, Ms. Dolmatch said that the community created the guidelines which envisioned a smaller building. Additionally, JAS will have to adhere to stormwater management requirements, which will also impact the height of the building.

Ms. Schlesinger commented that she preferred the scheme with no parking space and more open space. She asked if there was a way to define the private open space and to clarify the pathways.

Housing and Finance Committee Joint Session

Mr. Cotter provided a summary of the Housing and Finance Committee Joint Session that was held on July 10th. At the joint committee meeting, CDD staff presented a summary of the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, its history, and its work to date. Mr. Cotter informed the Trust that staff did not complete the presentation as the Chair wanted to open the session to public comment, which went until the end of the scheduled session. The meeting was recessed, with its continuation yet to be scheduled.

Mr. Stockard commented that the materials for the Council were excellent. He expressed gratefulness for the work that staff do and commented that additional administrative work may hinder staff's ability to do the main work. He advocated for a way to be more transparent while not adding more work.

Mr. Freeman agreed with Mr. Stockard's comments and noted how many projects are in the pipeline. He suggested creating a public database that would explain what the Trust has been working on for the last five years, as opposed to making long, written reports. Staff responded that Councillors have asked for an annual report, so staff are discussing what would go in that report and how to package it in an accessible way.

Ms. Schlesinger expressed support for an annual report and that staff should create a template. Creating more frequent reports may not be as helpful as some projects move slowly and may not show significant progress over a short period of time.

Chair Huang commended the work that staff and the Trust have done, especially within the last few years as more funding, thus more projects, has become available. Development work can be complex,

but he commented that the presentation slide with the graphic showing the funding sources and uses was very helpful to him. He acknowledged that there is a need to showcase the projects and their moving pieces.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion moved and seconded, by roll call of six in favor and three absent (Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeRosa, and Ms. Thorne), it was voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 26, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Materials:

- Agenda
- Minutes from the Trust's June 26, 2024 meeting
- Project Update
- Walden Square II – Planning Board AHO Design Review Report Memo – 8.1.2024
- Walden Square II – Planning Board AHO Design Review Report – 7.22.2024
- 49 6th Street – Additional Funding Request Memo 8.1.2024
- 28-30 Wendell Street Loan Term Update Request Memo 8.1.2024
- 35 Cherry Street – Preliminary Designs Memo 8.1.2024
- 35 Cherry Street AHO Community Meeting Presentation with preliminary designs 6.26.2024
- Housing and Finance Committee Presentation 7.10.2024