



DANVERS AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

TOWN HALL, DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS 01923
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Minutes February 15, 2017

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

Staff: Susan Fletcher and Francine Butler

Also Attending: David Gamache
Scott Harris, 3 Laurine Road
Richard Guerrette, 7 Laurine Road
Pauline Butler, 9 Laurine Road

Minutes of January 4, 2017 and January 18, 2017

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to approve the minutes of January 4, 2017.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to approve the minutes of January 17, 2017.

Laurine Road

Trask said that the neighbors and the Selectmen questioned whether this lot was buildable due to its size. Town Counsel stated that the lot conformed to the zoning regulations when the lot was taken by the Town so it is a pre-existing non-conforming lot.

Butler was concerned that the new house would need to be set back farther than the rest of the homes due to the present setbacks.

Gamache said that the neighbors would like the new house to conform to the neighborhood. They want it to look like the house was always there. Gamache questioned when the land taking happened, and he was told it was 1960. He asked when the zoning changed, and he was told 1961.

Gamache asked what the original setback requirement was. Alden said he was not sure, but it probably would have been 8-10 feet on the side and 20 feet in the front. He described how the measurement for frontage ran from the center of the street.

Trask pointed out that this lot was part of the original subdivision for the neighborhood.

Alden said the sidewalk could in fact be on their property. Today's standards are not the same. Today the property line would run to the sidewalk.

Gamache said the issue is the size of the lot and protecting the existing neighborhood. The neighbors do not want a garrison on a street with ranches. He confirmed that the property would be deeded affordable. He asked if the sidelines could be protected with fences or evergreens. He thought the house on Coolidge was huge. They want to protect the feel of a small neighborhood.

Trask wanted to clarify affordable housing verses low income housing. He explained that people with a range income of \$50,000 to \$75,000 with a family of four would qualify for affordable housing. Trask said that many people who work for the Town are in this income range. These people will be homeowners who will be paying real estate taxes. The sales price is capped in perpetuity. If a homeowner puts a lot of money into this home, they may not be able to recoup the money.

Gamache confirmed that should someone buy the property and improve it, they do it with the understanding that may not be able to recoup the money. He confirmed that this home would be purchased with a mortgage.

Fletcher said that there is a formula from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the sale. The property is deed-restricted.

Trask confirmed that there is a cap on the sales price.

Gamache confirmed that if the property was sold, it had to go to someone that qualified for affordable housing with the same formula. He asked if the taxes paid are the same as other homeowners on the street. Fletcher said that taxes may be adjusted due to the sales price.

Alden stated that the rear setback on this property is different due to the state highway. The rear setback is 30 feet, not 15 as set forth in the Town's bylaws. This would limit the ability to make the house bigger.

Gamache said that he did not agree with the new house having to have a 30-foot setback.

Gamache said that the builder has a right to ask for it, and the Trust was the builder. Trask corrected him and said that the Trust would not be the builder. Gamache said that the builder could ask for the setback to be the same as the other homes on the street. Trask said that they cannot put a requirement for a zoning change in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

A discussion ensued regarding the setbacks.

Butler said that the water table on that lot was high, and she was concerned that Gaudette would get additional water. Gaudette said that he was told that the lot did not perk when it was tested years ago. That was one of the reasons that they did not build on the lot.

Calhoun asked if they originally had septic systems. The neighbors confirmed that they did and now were connected to the Town.

Gamache asked if there was going to be a basement in the new home. Alden felt a basement may not be a priority since the home had to be handicapped accessible.

Gaudette said that there is a bog at the end of the street where it is a dead-end. When the two new commercial buildings were built on Conant Street, more water came into their neighborhood. He is concerned with the disruption of the land during construction.

Alden said that they may have an interior pumping system in the house.

Lentine asked how this would be handled if there was a high water table. Alden said if the topography of the lot does not change, the surface won't change. If they put in a basement, it could disrupt the water table.

Guadette asked that the house not have a basement.

Bernson felt that from a contractor's point of view, they would put in a slab rather than a basement.

Gamache asked if these issues would be brought to the builder's attention.

Fletcher said that the RFP encourages that the developer of the property meet with the neighbors.

Butler asked if they can have a Danvers resident.

Trask said this was tried in the past. DHCD does not support that restriction for a single-family home. Trask said that they would love to offer it to a local resident, but if that was a requirement the house would not count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

Gamanche felt that they could say that a Danvers resident could apply and qualify. Trask said that you could not say "only" a Danvers resident and have it qualify.

Trask said that they are not the party that determines who gets the home.

Fletcher said that they control the RFP, not the selection of the family.

Bernson said that there is a specific process to selecting the family.

Trask pointed out that when the Trust obtained Coolidge Road and Habitat for Humanity won the RFP, it was Habitat's process. The Trust had no decision who the family was.

Trask said there was discussion at the Selectmen's meeting to sell the property to the neighbors. He explained that there are only two ways to dispose of the property. The property can be given

to the Trust to follow through, or it goes to auction. He asked the neighbors if they wanted the property to go to auction.

Gaudette said no because the RFP would have more control. Gamache said that based upon the qualifications for affordable housing, the new owner of this home could possibly make more than some of the neighbors.

Lentine said that the discussion of what is considered affordable housing is a constant discussion with this Board.

Gaudette asked if they could try to apply a height requirement with the RFP. He said that there is only one home in the neighborhood that is higher than the others.

Calhoun said that the zoning bylaw states that the maximum height for that area is 30 feet.

Trask said that the deed restriction does not restrict height, and he is concerned with taking away a property owner's right. The sales price is the only restriction.

Fletcher felt the height would be controlled since it needed to be built as a handicapped accessible home.

Gamache asked if they could ask the builder to make it a home that is similar in size and height to the neighborhood.

Bernson said that the RFP states that the home should be similar to the neighborhood.

Fletcher said that the first page of the RFP stated that similarly scaled projects are a high priority.

Trask felt that economics would stop a developer from putting a second floor on the project.

Harris said that he is concerned with the house and is trying to visualize what it would look like.

Trask felt that they can conceptualize that this would be a little smaller than Richard's lot.

Trask suggested going through the RFP document.

Gaudette reiterated that no one in the neighborhood was happy about this. He felt it was not a great place to put a house.

Gamache told Gaudette that in Peabody they are going to put up a five-story apartment building in a flood zone that is a 40B project. Peabody is not at the 10% threshold.

Calhoun said that the RFP is the notice they put out for developers to build the project. It could be a private developer or a non-profit like Habitat for Humanity.

Gamache felt that a developer would not make money off this project. He felt that they would get a non-profit or technical school to build this.

They went over the RFP.

Gamache asked if the developer would have to submit plans. Bernson pointed out where the language was in the RFP.

Gamache confirmed that bids are solicited, but if they do not like the bids they do not have to go through with it.

Gaudette asked if the neighbors would be allowed to see the design. Fletcher said it is a public document that could be reviewed.

Gaudette said that he replaced a fence that had been in the same location for years, and he is not sure it is on his land. Fletcher said that the Trust does not have control of that.

Gamache asked if they could have control over fences or shrubs for the neighbors.

Alden pointed out that the neighborhood does not have stockade fences.

Trask said that the RFP only controls the building until it is sold.

Calhoun said that maybe they could state that post-construction landscaping to be completed with minimal removal of existing buffer. Fletcher pointed out that the RFP had similar language. They will add the language for existing shrubbery.

Gamache felt that Gaudette now knows that the RFP will control what will go on that lot.

Calhoun pointed out that after the home is built and the first family moves, the next family needs to be within the income guidelines. There is a formula as to how much the first owner can sell the home for.

Gamache confirmed that when the house is sold it needs to meet the affordability guidelines. A homeowner can put as much money as he wants into the home, but they may not get the money back.

Gamache asked if the grant of a property needs to go to Town Meeting.

Fletcher said that Town Counsel has determined since this property was taken in tax title, it can go to auction or go to the Selectmen. The Selectmen can then transfer the property to the Trust. Town Meeting has given the Trust the ability to accept property from the Town for affordable housing.

Calhoun said the Selectmen could say that the obligation is to sell this asset to bring funds into the Town coffers. However, the Town is committed to promoting affordable housing.

Calhoun said that years ago she lived on Hardy Street. Between her house and the neighbor's house was an open area where all the kids could play on the lawn. The neighbor's house was sold and a fence was put up. It was part of their neighborhood, and they did enjoy this open space for a number of years. The memories cannot be taken away.

Trask said that he would like to tell the Selectmen that they have answered all the neighbor's questions.

Butler said that she may not be able to attend the Selectmen's meeting on Tuesday. Trask suggested she send a letter with her comments or questions.

Next Meeting Date

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be on March 15, 2017.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Tish Lentine