



# DANVERS AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

TOWN HALL, DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS 01923  
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## TOWN MANAGER'S CONFERENCE ROOM Minutes February 28, 2018

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

**Staff:** Susan Fletcher and Francine Butler

### **40-44 Maple Street**

Trask told the Board that he watched the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) meeting and raised a concern to Steve Bartha regarding comments made by some of the ZBA members regarding a unit being 70% affordable rather than 80% affordable. It was a statement that was fallacious, and he felt this was an educational opportunity. Trask said that Dan Bennett is concerned about this, and he was influential in getting the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust off the ground.

Trask said that Bartha called him and was concerned that the design of 40-44 Maple Street did not adhere to the design guideline standards that were voted for the Maple Street overlay district.

Fletcher said that the Planning Board will be considering some of the design guidelines from the recently voted overlay district to be included in the overlay district for the C1 and C2 zoning districts. However several property owners are anticipating that residential uses will be allowed in overlay districts and so they are requesting variances from the ZBA that would allow for residential uses now.

Trask said that the Trust has little leverage. The present Multi-Family Inclusionary Zoning only applies when a property owner comes before the Planning Board for a Special Permit.

Trask said that they had negotiated a unit at 70% of the AMI with the developer of this property. This is the reason for the letter that they are looking to send to Robert Cignetti. Trask said that Fletcher would include the rental grid with this letter.

Calhoun said that the second to last paragraph the letter regarding the income level is confusing. She did not like the wording of “. . . an income in excess of \$50,000”. She felt it should just read “. . . an income of \$50,700”.

Alden felt that they should copy the Planning Board on this letter to be transparent of the Trust's actions. This way other Boards can see what we are presenting.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously voted to forward a letter with the adjustment to change the language from an income in excess of \$50,000 to an income level of \$50,700 with a copy to be sent to other Boards.

Trask said that Bartha wanted the Trust to ask the Selectmen to recommend to the ZBA and the Planning Board that developers follow the design standard guidelines that are being used in the overlay district. Trask said that they could not do that. He said that they could discuss the 20%.

Bartha wants to encourage the ZBA and Planning Board to be cognizant and consider the design standard guidelines that was just passed for the overlay district for applications coming before them on High Street, Maple Street and Elm Street. Trask said that we could forward a letter of support regarding affordable housing.

Trask said that he had some slight changes to the last paragraph of the proposed letter. He told the Board that they need to tell the Selectmen what they are asking. They should say that they would like the Selectmen to encourage the ZBA and Planning Board to consider the 20% threshold identified.

Fletcher said asking the Selectmen to speak to other boards makes her uneasy. The Selectmen can make their own decisions after they get the information. She felt they should not ask them to talk or meet with other boards.

Calhoun pointed out that the Town worked hard on the overlay district. It took a lot of time and input. How can they ask the ZBA, Planning Board and Selectmen to apply it?

Trask said that they would only ask the Selectmen. The ZBA and Planning Board are appointed bodies. We are asking the Selectmen to consider this. They are falling behind the 10% threshold requirement, and is there a way to ask other Boards to be aware of this.

Fletcher said that so many of the variances granted by the ZBA do not appear to meet the criteria needed for a variance. The ZBA could not approve an application since there is not a hardship. Traditionally the ZBA has treated variances like a special permit or created zoning on the spot without Town Meeting.

Bernson pointed out that they were trying to enforce an ordinance that does not apply.

Alden said that they are asking the ZBA to consider the 20% affordability provision, not enforce it.

Calhoun confirmed that they are providing information to the Selectmen and giving the Trust's opinion.

Calhoun said that developers have come to the Trust voluntarily. Why not tell the Selectmen what the Trust is doing? She does not understand what 'the ask' is to the Selectmen.

Fletcher said that this originated with Bartha looking for Trust support of having affordable housing, and having all this development that does not have any affordable housing to it.

Trask said that they are concerned that the growth of development has or will push the Town below the 10% threshold since the last census.

Bernson said that they work with developers to provide units. We are encouraging other boards to do the same.

Calhoun felt they should use this letter to inform the Selectmen of what the Trust has done. She does not like the word "circumvent". We have addressed this problem with a cooperative effort. Developers have come to the Trust asking them to support their projects, and we have negotiated a unit or a financial contribution which we feel furthers our affordable housing mandate. She felt this should be an informational letter.

Alden said they should be asking the Selectmen to support the Trust in this mission.

Calhoun said that the way the bylaws are now written, the Trust is limited. Even with those limitations, they have been able to achieve these goals.

Trask said currently under the Multi-Family Affordability Provision (Section 30.2.16) requires some affordable housing relief by special Permit in the Residential I, II and III and Commercial 1-A areas.

Calhoun felt instead of saying affordable housing relief, they should say increasing affordable housing opportunities.

Trask said that at the Selectmen's meeting, he was going to raise issues unrelated to the Trust. He does not want a development downtown that does not adhere to the design standards.

Calhoun said that you have setbacks and designs in the new overlay district for new construction. She asked how this would work if there is an existing building on the site.

Fletcher said that they will see different zoning in the C-1 and C-1A areas. A lot of buildings in the present overlay district may be demolished which gives a blank slate. The new area will have different design specs since most of the buildings in the downtown area are attached.

Trask said that they don't want projects going in that are fundamentally like the overlay. The housing trust is losing ground to the 10% requirement.

Calhoun felt that should be the focus of the letter.

Alden asked how they would respond if the Trust was invited to tell the Selectmen what they want for support.

Trask said that the Trust is sending a letter of request for them to support the Trust in its goals. A discussion about the ZBA and the Planning Board will probably happen.

Trask told the Board to respond directly to Fletcher.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to forward the letter to the Selectmen after making the edits discussed.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Tish Lentine, Clerk