

Fiscal Year 2021
Burlington Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Administrative Committee (HTFAC)
Meeting Minutes

Approved

Meeting Date/Time: December 15, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

Meeting Location: Virtually Via Zoom Meeting

Present: City Councilor Brian Pine
Mayor's Office Communications and Projects Coordinator Olivia LaVecchia
Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO) Director Luke McGowan
CEDO Community Development Specialist Marcella Gange
CEDO Housing Program Manager Todd Rawlings

Absent: None

Also Present: Chris Donnelly (Champlain Housing Trust (CHT))
Robert Leuchs (CHT)
Cindy Reid (Cathedral Square Corporation (CSC))
Miranda Lescaze (CSC)
Mary Mougey (Living Well Group (LWG))
Cameron Segal (LWG)
Kathryn Nunnelley (ANEW Place (AP))
Kevin Pounds (AP)
Tamira Martel (Committee On Temporary Shelter (COTS))

Meeting called to order: by Director McGowan at 11:03 a.m.

Agenda: Motion made by Councilor Pine to accept the Agenda as drafted, seconded by Coordinator LaVecchia. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

- a. **Minutes:** Motion made by Coordinator LaVecchia to accept draft minutes for the meeting dated January 30, 2020, seconded by Councilor Pine. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Forum: No members of the public wished to speak

New Business:

- a. **Review/Discuss FY21 Grant Proposals**

Discussion:

Project Grant Applications

Director McGowan: This year Burlington has seen the impacts of the health and economic crises. At the last meeting the committee agreed to shift the prioritization of awards to the creation of new units, but changes to the allocation process were put on hold. He is not sure what will happen with the federal moratorium on evictions and what federal resources will be available to assist Burlington residents impacted by COVID-19. The City Administration wants to ensure that as many resources as possible are available to assist Burlingtonians and he supports postponing FY21 HTF project awards until we know more about whether the moratorium will be extended and whether additional rental assistance will be provided by the federal government. If further assistance is not on its way, then he supports a new HTF Request for Proposals in January to assist households at risk of eviction. He noted that FY21 was a tight year for the fund with about half of last year's resources available to award.

Coordinator LaVecchia: The committee is meeting at a time of uncertainty and there could be big changes soon regarding assistance for affordable housing. She also supports holding off on making FY21 project awards. For many years the HTF was made whole by the Mayor and City Council, but FY21 was a tough budget year. This is the first time that the HTFAC has met since the change to the City charter which increased dedicated tax for the HTF.

Councilor Pine: Last year's requests gave him pause. Originally the HTF was intended to help preserve and produce new affordable housing, but with one exception, the applications were for maintenance activities. He is protective of the capacity grants and supports their use for staff costs. This year he would support funding capacity applications and holding off on the decisions about projects for two months. He believes that there are other sources, including Burlington Electric Department (BED) funds, which could support most of the project applications.

[In the Zoom chat area at 11:17 a.m. From Cindy Reid to All Panelists: "I'm curious as to which project funding request(s) you think meets the intent of the BHTF?"]

[In the Zoom chat area at 11:19 a.m. From Brian Pine to All Panelists: "All of the requests have merit and I see CHT's request for Lafountain St. as most closely aligned with the purposes of the HTF."]

Coordinator LaVecchia: BED got a \$500,000 EDA grant. She said that it is a good question about intent of the HTF. Last year, the HTFAC heard that the surge in production of new units was a result of the statewide \$35 million housing bond. She would like to hear from applicants.

Cindy Reid (CSC): CSC appreciates the HTF awards which were used to buy the land for the Juniper project. New affordable housing projects take many years to develop and require many funding sources. Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) funds must be spread out geographically in Vermont. The HTF allows CSC to do other projects because they cannot focus exclusively on new production and these smaller projects are critical.

Cameron Segal (LWG): LWG is thankful for the support of the HTF. Since Medicare payments to LWG are limited, upgrades are not possible without the HTF. The kinds of improvements funded by the HTF have not happened outside of Burlington.

Councilor Pine asked if Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds could assist these projects.

Manager Rawlings said that since the 15% Public Service limit for CDBG has been temporarily lifted, CDBG might assist capacity applications.

Director McGowan: If CDBG is not needed for rent relief, then it could be reallocated. He moved to postpone the decision about project applications until February.

Councilor Pine: Seconded the motion. The Ethan Allen Residence (EAR) project would benefit COVID reduction if it were a congregate facility.

Mary Mougey (LWG) said the EAR project is not COVID-related and there is no COVID in the facility.

Cameron Segal (LWG) said that the proposed bathroom project might allow the area to be used for a quarantine or isolation wing.

Mary Mougey (LWG) agreed.

Director McGowan asked what the timeline was for the EAR project.

Mary Mougey (LWG) said that it could start right away if it were funded.

[In the Zoom chat area at 11:42 a.m. From Living Well Group to All Panelists: "I just want to add that we are happy to explore alternative sources."]

Councilor Pine asked whether other funds could be used for the COTS Wilson project.

Tamira Martel (COTS): She understands the concerns from HTFAC about funding maintenance projects and echoes Cindy Reid and Mary Mougey about the importance of the HTF for small projects. The HTF funded the bathroom improvements at the Wilson last year and that helped with health outcomes.

Councilor Pine said that Schurz may be able to contribute to the Cathedral Square Senior Living project.

Coordinator LaVecchia moved to amend the motion to fund the **Ethan Allen Residence/West Wing Bathroom Accessibility** project for \$17,400.00 and postpone the decision on the rest of the project applications. Councilor Pine seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Capacity Grant Applications

Director McGowan: The non-profits who applied are on the front lines of this crisis. \$125,200 was requested, but the maximum that can be awarded is \$83,249, so the HTFAC could approach this by: a proration, fully fund some applications, or ask the applicant to discuss reducing the requested amount.

Councilor Pine asked whether ANEW Place was getting operating assistance from the City's general fund.

Cindy Reid (CSC): She will defer to Kathryn (Nunnelley) about that, but understands that ANEW Place needs \$110,000 for operating expenses.

Kathryn Nunnelley (AP) said that the City has offered \$100,000, but there is still a gap of \$100,000.

Director McGowan asked whether this was every year.

Kathryn Nunnelley (AP) said AP's low barrier shelter had received funding from the City over multiple years.

Councilor Pine said that there is a regional responsibility to address these issues and Burlington is bearing a burden which should be supported regionally.

[In the Zoom chat area at 11:53 a.m. From Kathryn Nunnelley to All Panelists: "Those conversations are in the works right now for other municipalities to help."]

Coordinator LaVecchia agreed with Councilor Pine, supports assisting AP this year, and want AP to help further those regional conversations.

b. Approve/Deny/Request Additional Information for FY21 Grant Proposals

Discussion: [see above]

Motion made by Councilor Pine to fund the **Champlain Housing Trust** capacity application for \$39,624.86, **Cathedral Square Corporation** capacity application for \$19,624.85, **ANEW Place/Low Barrier Temporary Housing Facility** capacity application for \$6,000.00, **HomeShare Vermont** capacity application for \$6,000.00, the **Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)/Waystation** capacity application for \$6,000.00, and **Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)/Housing Resource Center** capacity application for \$6,000.00. Seconded by Coordinator LaVecchia. Motion passed unanimously.

[Note: a motion regarding project applications can be found on page three of the minutes.]

Upcoming meetings:

Discussion: None.

Adjournment: Motion made by Coordinator LaVecchia to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Director McGowan. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:
Todd Rawlings
Housing Trust Fund Staff