



MASSACHUSETTS

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Gary Christenson, Mayor

## Malden Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2021 – 5:00 PM

### Trustees

Mayor Gary Christenson

Steve Finn

Angie Liou

Catherine Price

Roxanne Reddington-Wilde

Brian Slater

Councillor-at-large Stephen Winslow

### New Business:

#### 1. Call to Order

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

Mayor Christenson read the following remote meeting notice into the record:

*In accordance with Governor Baker's 3/12/20 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's 3/23/20 Revised Guidance on Order by the Governor Prohibiting Assemblage of More than Ten People, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation. In person attendance by members of the public is prohibited, and all effort will be made to permit public attendance of this meeting, in the manner specified below, via remote access by internet, telephone, and if available via public broadcast of the meeting by Malden Access Cable Television on public access television channels. Public access will also be provided by posting draft minutes, and/or a transcript, recording, or record of the meeting on the City of Malden website at [cityofmalden.org](http://cityofmalden.org) as soon as practicable after the meeting.*

*Additional information/guidelines for the public can be found here:*

*<https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/2487/Public-information-on-Public-Meetings-and-Hearings-during-the-Declared-State-of-Emergency-related-to-COVID19PDF>*

*Members of the public who wish to attend remotely can do so using the following information:*

*Please click the link below to join the webinar:*

*<https://zoom.us/j/95585353046?pwd=YlhralBScjh4ZnpVdyt0WE5qMVhBZz09>*

*Passcode: MAHTF20*

*Or iPhone one-tap :*

US: +16465189805,,98227686340#,,,,\*8027017# or  
+19294362866,,98227686340#,,,,\*8027017#

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Webinar ID: 982 2768 6340

Passcode: 8027017

International numbers available: <https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/98227686340>

Evan Spetrini called the roll

- Trustees Present: Mayor Gary Christenson, Steve Finn, Angie Liou, Roxanne Reddington-Wilde, Councillor-at-large Stephen Winslow
- Others Present: Evan Spetrini, Senior Planner, Malden Redevelopment Authority; Alex Pratt, Community Development Director, Malden Redevelopment Authority

## **2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 20, 2021**

On a motion by Ms. Liou and seconded by Mr. Slater, the minutes from the January 20, 2021 meeting were approved unanimously.

## **3. Mayor's Affordable Housing Program Updates**

### **a. Eviction Prevention Program**

Mr. Pratt gave an update on the City and MRA's Eviction Prevention Program. He said they were able to successfully spend the \$500,000 budgeted for the program, clearing 2020 rent debt for 133 households. The average rent owed was \$4,630. He explained that fewer evictions were filed in Malden than other communities like Chelsea and Lynn, and those that are taking place are resolved at a fairly high success rate when the tenant appears in court. Mr. Pratt explained that the biggest challenges are when a tenant doesn't show up in court and when evictions take place outside of court, which is illegal, but often times the tenants or landlords don't know that. They have had success in resolving many of those cases when the tenants reach out, but expect many others are unaware of existing resources. Often times landlords are just looking for rental assistance and are willing to work with the MRA. Mr. Pratt expects to see more illegal evictions and stressed the need for more public education on tenants' rights.

Ms. Reddington-Wilde asked if tenants are provided interpreters in court if needed. Mr. Pratt said yes, the courts handle interpretation services. If they know that someone needs those services, they will give the court a heads up. Ms. Reddington-Wilde asked if tenants were aware of these services ahead of time or if they are choosing not to appear in court because of language barriers. Mr. Pratt said he does not have hard data on that but expects that is a problem. He added that they could partner with the courts to disseminate that information.

Ms. Liou asked if landlords have been cooperative. Mr. Pratt said most of them have been willing to work with the MRA. Often times the landlords are hurting and just looking for assistance so they are willing to accept these resources and keep their tenants housed. Ms. Reddington-Wilde said that ABCD has a new program called ABCD Connect that provides resources for households hurt by COVID-19. Mr. Pratt said he would work to get the word out about that program as well.

Mayor Christenson asked Mr. Pratt to talk about the negotiations he had with some of the larger landlords in Malden. Mr. Pratt told the Trustees that they made deals with two of the city's largest landlords to provide rental assistance to their tenants. One landlord agreed to forgive 60% of rent arrears while the City covered 40%. The other landlord agreed to a 50/50 split and agreed not to file any evictions until April 1. He added that the State is taking so long with their own rental assistance programs that landlords are willing to make concessions.

**b. Inclusionary Zoning**

Mr. Spetrini stated that he is currently working with Michelle Romero, City Planner, and Debbie Burke, Executive Director of the MRA, to incorporate the policy goals that the Trust had approved at the January meeting into the existing draft ordinance. They are currently focusing on the approval procedures and administration pieces of the draft ordinance. He said it should be ready to go to the City Council in a few more weeks.

Mayor Christenson asked Councillor Winslow if he believed there was support in the City Council to consider the proposal. Councillor Winslow said he believed that the Council would support the proposal and added that they are more ready now than a few years ago when the idea was first introduced.

**c. Neighborhood Hub**

Mr. Spetrini reviewed the Neighborhood Hub memo given to the Trustees (see attached). He stated that they are waiting for a final MOU from MassHousing but have started on a few of the tasks including creating a job description for the proposed housing inspector.

Ms. Liou asked if the MassHousing funds are just for planning or if there is funding for acquisition and rehabilitation of the vacant properties. Mr. Spetrini explained that the Neighborhood Hub funding is just for technical assistance. They have identified two expenses so far: the housing inspector and developing the online application portal. However, those will not add up to the \$100,000 offered through the program so there are opportunities for more technical assistance. Ms. Liou stated that local funds will not be enough to carry out all of the projects so they should look at State funding sources as well. Mr. Spetrini said he wanted to focus on local sources first because the City has more control over them, but other sources should be identified in the prioritization plan.

Ms. Liou added that Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) has a revolving line of credit with Mass Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC) to carry out Somerville's 100 Homes program. That allows them to quickly buy properties before they come off the market. Mr. Slater added that SCC has a \$4,000,000 line of credit for that program. The pandemic has actually reduced the need to buy up properties quickly so they haven't needed that credit recently. He added that East Boston Savings Bank provides bridge funding for SCC to purchase and rehabilitate those properties. Then they bundle multiple properties and secure tax exempt bonds from MassDevelopment for long-term financing.

Ms. Reddington-Wilde stated that she could be of assistance through her work with the Anti-Foreclosure Coalition in identifying who actually owns the properties in question. Mr. Spetrini said that he intends to develop alternative strategies for different types of properties based on their ownership status.

Councillor Winslow asked if the CDCs would run the larger properties as affordable rental housing or if they would flip them with deed restrictions. Mr. Spetrini stated that they are agnostic at this point when it comes to rental vs. homeownership. He expects that the CDCs will want to retain ownership of the properties and run them as rental housing. Through the prioritization plan, we may decide that larger properties ought to be rental, while single-family homes should be offered as affordable homeownership projects.

**4. Finance Report**

Mr. Spetrini read an update on the Trust's finances from Dan Grover, City Treasurer. The current balance of the Trust is \$657,273.31. There are no current open liabilities that the Treasurer is aware of. The Trust has been formally recorded at the registry and upon that confirmation the Affordable Housing Trust Fund bank account was funded. The amount of \$657,273.31 was deposited into the AHTF account on February 10, 2021. The Trust will now earn and have interest posted on a monthly basis, Current interest rate is 10 basis points or point 1 percent. The Interest rates continue to be incredibly low across the market for reasons previously discussed. The Treasurer will continue to monitor the market for opportunities to extract yield where fiscally reasonable and responsible.

**5. Action Plan Sub-Committee Report**

Mr. Spetrini gave a brief update on the draft Action Plan. He stated that Noah McDaniel completed his internship at the end of January and left a good first draft of the report. Mr. Spetrini is currently working on editing that draft and fleshing out a few of the sections. He stated that the first-year priorities and the budget are the most incomplete sections. He will have more to share with the subcommittee at their meeting on March 3.

**6. Adjournment**

Councillor Winslow made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ms. Reddington-Wilde. All Trustees voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 5:44 PM.