

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SOMERVILLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND**

KATJANA BALLANTYNE

MAYOR

Andrea Shapiro, Managing Trustee

Trustees

Brielle Calderan
Mary Cassesso
Michael Feloney
Kathryn Gallant
David Gibbs
Donna Haynes
Councilor Charlotte Kelly

Minutes*

Thursday, February 2, 2023 Meeting – 5:15 pm

***Please note that the Trust held two meetings in the month of February. The February 2nd meeting focused on Strategic Planning the Trust initiated in April, 2022. The second meeting, held on February 9th, included regular monthly business items.**

Trustees attending: Brielle Calderan, Mary Cassesso, Mike Feloney, Katie Gallant, David Gibbs, Donna Haynes, Charlotte Kelly, Andrea Shapiro

Staff attending, Paul Goldstein, (OSPCD- Housing Division)

Members of the public attending: Roberta Cameron (OSPCD-staff to the Community Preservation Committee), Jill Currier (Office of Housing Stability)

The meeting started at 5:15 pm, with Andrea Shapiro serving in the role of chairperson.

1. Re-introduction of JM Goldson team.

Paul Goldstein introduced Jenn Goldson of JM Goldson; the firm contracted by the Trust to produce a new Strategic Plan. The Trust had requested an additional meeting with Jenn to walk through the latest draft of the Strategic Plan since the last time Jenn met with the Trust was during the October, 2022 meeting when Jenn's time was cut short due to technical difficulties. In addition to the review of the draft plan, Jenn will also facilitate discussion on revising the funding application for the Trust as part of her updated scope of work for Strategic Planning services.

2. Draft Strategic Plan review.

Jenn began by noting that she will be able to make another round of revisions to the draft plan based on feedback from Trustees at tonight's meeting. Jenn proceeded to walk through the draft plan, beginning with the Goals of the Trust (chapter 1). Jenn explained that the Goals section was revised to reflect the feedback she received from Trustees during the Trustee one-on-one interview portion of the Strategic Planning process. The Guidelines section which followed the Goals of the Trust remained largely unchanged from the 2014 Strategic Plan.

Jenn asked Trustees for any comments or questions about the Goals section of the plan, which was broken into four categories of Goals (Create, Preserve & Support, Advocate, Services and Other Assistance, Board Operations and Program Administration). Trustees had mixed feelings about

including Board Operations as part of the Goals section, noting that while important, it may make more sense to have Board Operations in another part of the plan. Other suggestions included creating a separate section of the plan for administrative and governance guidance, or keeping some aspects of the Board Operations goal in place and move others to different sections. Jenn noted that she would give some additional thought on how to best include Board Operations in the final version of the Strategic Plan.

Trustees felt that the Advocate section of the Goals should remain as written with regard to advocating for policy which advances housing goals in Somerville. The more micro and specific certain goals are presented could lead to the plan being outdated or not being inclusive of other significant policy updates. Trustees also noted that advocacy by the Trust has in the past been done on an individual basis (such as providing testimony at the State house for the Home Rule Petition, or appearing at community events), and some Trustees noted that they had not participated in any sort of advocacy other than at the monthly meetings. Additionally, while Trustees agreed that while the Advocate portion of the Goals could remain as written, it would be important to have a conversation in the future regarding individual advocacy efforts to ensure those efforts accurately reflect the position of the Board as a whole.

On the Services and Other Assistance section of the Goals, Trustees had a question about the 80% AMI limit for housing stability programs, as the Trust is able to serve households earning up to 110% AMI. Other Trustees and staff responded noting that the type of eviction prevention services which the Trust's housing stability programs are modeled after have an income limit of 80% Area Median Income (AMI), and the target population served is usually in a much lower income tier. Jenn noted that the 110% income limit was addressed in a previous paragraph under Create, Preserve, and Support, which referenced supporting affordable home ownership opportunities for households at or below 110% AMI.

Jenn moved discussion to the Guidelines section of the plan, starting with the percentage allocation of funds to various programs and activities which were established in the 2014 plan. Jenn noted that the new plan did not have to include any type of percentage allocation. Trustees were in favor of including categories for how Trust funds are used and not assigning percentages to those categories. Trustees suggested that how much funding the Trust allocates to each category could be part of an annual discussion on priorities, and those priorities would be communicated to the public so that funding proposals are in line with the Trust's priorities. Trustees also noted that including percentages would not make sense since the Trust's funding priorities could change depending on current market conditions or other factors (such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when demand for housing assistance programs was very high). Jenn noted she would revise this section to remove the percentage allocations, and would add flexible language for how much funding the Trust could commit to each category.

For the Terms of Assistance section under Guidelines, Trustees suggested that the terms and conditions be revisited on a regular basis and not included as part of the Strategic Plan. Jenn noted she would revise this section to read that current terms and conditions can be provided by staff upon request. Trustees also suggested the information under Loans and Process for Applying to the Trust in the Guidelines section be included in greater detail on the revised funding application Jenn is working to develop.

Trustees next discussed the ordering of the chapters in the draft plan, specifically questioning why "Introduction" was included as part of chapter 2 (Background) and not in the beginning of the document. Trustees suggested various revisions to make the ordering of the chapters more intuitive, including moving the introductory portion of chapter 2 into the Executive Summary. Other suggestions included moving parts of chapter 2 to an appendix, and moving the contents of chapter 3 (Planning Process) to an introduction. After further discussion, Jenn noted that based on the feedback

provided by Trustees, she will move the Introduction to chapter 1 (before the Goals section), move the contents of chapter 2 to an appendix, and move the contents of chapter 3 to the Introduction.

3. *Revised application and evaluation tool for funding requests to the Trust.*

Trustees reiterated their desire to create a revised funding application which is consistent with the priorities identified in the new Strategic Plan, and to create some type of scoring sheet that the Trust can use to evaluate funding requests. A revised application with established criteria would allow for a more cohesive application process and help guide deliberations in a consistent manner. Trustees noted their preference for clear deadlines to be included on the revised application, and suggested a deadline of applying no later than two weeks prior to the meeting when the application would be considered. Trustees also asked that any application be provided by staff to applicants upon request.

Mike Feloney noted that in the past, applicants have reached out directly to the Mayor's office or Trustees to voice their displeasure if they were informed that their request may not be considered at the next scheduled meeting. Mike further noted that he had followed up with other Boards and Commissions in the City on the timing of when materials were received in order to be considered. Mike shared that Boards which have a meeting on Wednesday or Thursday typically request materials be submitted by the Friday before the meeting, with a final deadline of the following Monday if necessary. Trustees acknowledged that certain types of requests warranted more immediate attention, such as requests for additional funds to address a previously unanticipated funding gap. However, there should be a distinction between those types of requests and first-time applicants. First time applicants should bring their request to the Trust as early as possible, and consider a preliminary meeting prior to the application being submitted where the project is introduced to Trustees.

David Gibbs identified 3 types of requests all of which would require different criteria: non-emergency first time requests (including preliminary introductions), a returning requester looking for a modification to an existing commitment, and applications for the Early Action Acquisition Fund. First time requests would require the most lead time to be considered, while returning requesters would require less time as the Trust would already be familiar with the project. Applications for the Early Action Acquisition Fund would have to be considered on a faster timeline.

Jenn thanked Trustees for their suggestions and feedback for a revised funding application, and shared that the next steps would be for her to meet with Trust staff to discuss the revised application further. Jenn noted that she would present a draft of the revised application at a subsequent meeting with the Trust. Jenn also noted that it would take her at least a couple of weeks to revise the Strategic Plan to incorporate feedback given at tonight's meeting.

4. *Adjournment.*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 PM.

Documents distributed:

- Draft December Strategic Plan, first circulated to Trustees in November, 2022