

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, April 13, 2023 Meeting – 4:30 pm**

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

Staff attending: Paul Goldstein, Lisa Davidson, Alexis Turgeon (OSPCD- Housing Division)

Members of the public attending: Vladimir Benoit (Somerville YMCA), Charles King (CSG Urban Planners), Isabelle Beauregard, Andrea Jumez

The meeting started at 4:30 pm, with Andrea Shapiro serving in the role of chairperson.

*1. February 9, and March 9, 2023 Meeting minutes review and approval*

Mary Cassesso made a **motion** to approve the February 9 minutes. Katie Gallant seconded the motion and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote. Mary made a second **motion** to approve the March 9 meeting minutes. Katie seconded the motion and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote.

*2. New Business*

**Somerville YMCA introductory presentation on potential acquisition.** Paul Goldstein introduced Vladimir Benoit, President and CEO of the Somerville YMCA. Vladimir, along with Charles King of CSG Urban Partners (whose consultant services have been retained by the YMCA), were in attendance to introduce an affordable housing project the YMCA hopes to pursue as part of the overall redevelopment of its Somerville location. The first step in the project would be the acquisition of a parcel adjacent to the YMCA.

Vladimir thanked the Trustees for their time, and proceeded to give a brief overview of the Somerville YMCA's activities and goals, and described the potential redevelopment of the existing Somerville site. Vladimir noted his personal connection to the Somerville YMCA, having grown up in Somerville and greatly benefited from the services the YMCA provides to children and young adults. Vladimir shared that the YMCA's vision for the redevelopment of the Somerville location included potentially 80-120 new units of housing, as well as creating a state-of-the-art community campus that offers expanded and enhanced services to Somerville residents. Vladimir noted that the first step to realizing this vision would be the acquisition of adjacent parcels to the YMCA. The YMCA is hoping to be in a position to request between two and three million dollars from the Trust at the May meeting to assist with that acquisition.

Andrea Shapiro thanked Vladimir for his presentation, and thanked him for sharing his experiences of growing up in Somerville and the role the YMCA played in those experiences. Andrea then asked Trustees for any questions, and noted that since the project is still in a preliminary phase, Trustees should wait to ask about specific details about the project, such as income tiers and unit sizes.

Trustees asked about the projected budget, which was included in the presentation, and about the potential number of affordable units at the project. Vladimir and Charles noted that these numbers were still preliminary, but ideally as many affordable units as possible would be part of the final project. Charles further noted that the number of affordable units is dependent on how much funding the project could secure. The YMCA is pursuing several potential funding options and seeking to partner with a developer on the project.

Mike Feloney acknowledged a question from the public which was asked using the “Q & A” function on Zoom. The question was about the relocation of existing tenants in the building located on the parcel the YMCA was hoping to acquire. Trustees noted that while this was a good question, it should be tabled to when a formal funding request is made, and other more detailed questions about the project can be asked and answered by the YMCA.

Vladimir and Charles thanked the Trustees for their time, and left the meeting.

**Somerville Homeless Coalition request-reallocation of funding from current Leasing Differential contract to current Tenancy Stabilization Program contract.** Paul explained that The Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC) is requesting that \$60,000 of its current Leasing Differential program contract be re-allocated to its current Tenancy Stabilization Program (TSP) contract. Paul called attention to the memo from SHC which was included with meeting materials sent to the Board. The memo noted that demand for TSP continues to be significant, and SHC anticipates it will have spent down the entirety of its FY21 TSP award by this month. The memo further noted that since there is currently less of a need for Leasing Differential program funding, SHC is comfortable with funds dedicated to that program being re-allocated to its TSP.

Paul suggested that given the high demand for TSP, and that other agencies are fast approaching drawing down on the entirety of their TSP awards, that the Trust consider initiating an RFP process for TSP during the summer which will draw on the FY23 Community Preservation Act (CPA) allocation to the Trust.

Katie asked if this reallocation of funding would provide assistance to applicants who were already deemed eligible for the program. Brielle Calderan noted that SHC currently has around 30 applications which were found eligible in the pipeline, and that the waitlist is up to 250 applicants. Brielle further noted that applications for TSP were coming in at an extremely high volume. Mike asked if the increase in applications was tied to the end of the eviction moratorium. Brielle noted that she couldn't say for sure, but that the increase has happened in the current calendar year (2023), after the moratorium had ended. Brielle also shared that the Community Action Agency of Somerville and the City's Office of Housing Stability have also seen similar increases in requests for housing assistance.

Mary made a **motion** to approve SHC's request to reallocate \$60,000 from its Leasing Differential program contract to its TSP contract. Donna Haynes seconded the motion, and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote, with Brielle abstaining.

**Acceptance of transfer of City funds to the Trust for the purpose of funding the Municipal Voucher Program.** Paul reminded Trustees that during the March meeting, he had noted that the City Council was set to vote on approval of a transfer of approximately \$1.8 million of the City's "free cash" to the Trust for the purposes of matching the Trust's funding commitment to the Municipal Voucher Program (MVP). Paul shared that the City Council at its March 9 meeting did approve the transfer of \$1,848,374 to the Trust. The funds were transferred to the Trust's non-CPA bank account shortly thereafter. Paul suggested that a motion similar to the one passed at last month's meeting, at which the Trust passed a motion to accept a transfer of City funds to support rehab at various SCC properties, be voted on at tonight's meeting to accept the transfer of funds for MVP.

Donna made a **motion** to accept the transfer of \$1,848,374 of the City's "free cash" to the Trust's non-CPA account for the purpose of funding the Municipal Voucher Program. Mary seconded the motion, and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote.

**Early Action Acquisition Fund-interim application review and potential action.** Paul shared that following the March Trust meeting, he and Mike met Jenn Goldson as part of the ongoing efforts to finalize the Trust's Strategic Plan and to create revised funding applications, including an application for the Early Action Acquisition Fund, and criteria which the Trust can use to evaluate funding requests in a consistent manner. Paul noted that creating an application for the Early Action Acquisition Fund was identified as the top priority, considering that the Somerville YMCA may be in a position to request funding from that source as soon as the May meeting.

Paul explained that Jenn provided an initial draft application for the Early Action Fund, which he reviewed and provided comments on. Because of the potentially imminent need for an application form the Fund, Paul suggested that the Trust approve the draft application as an interim application. If approved by the Trust, the interim application could be used as a means to consider any potential Early Action Acquisition Fund applications until a finalized application is available.

Trustees were receptive to the use of an interim application, and noted that since this is a new funding source, the Trust may want to consider modifications to the application following a first submission. Mary made a **motion** to approve the use of the "interim" application for the Early Action Acquisition Fund, until a revised and finalized version is approved by the Trust at a later date.

### 3. *Continued Business*

**Closing Cost Assistance-program review, proposed allocation of funds, and recommended program changes.** Paul noted that he re-circulated the memo which had been prepared for the March meeting regarding the staff recommendations on various aspects of the Trust's Closing Cost Assistance program. Those recommendations were: to increase the maximum amount of assistance from \$3,500 to \$5,000 per household, allocate \$75,000 of non-CPA Trust funds for Closing Cost Assistance, and keep in place selected aspects of the Trust's CCA program which differ from HOME-funded CCA, to allow for greater program flexibility. Paul also included a summary table noting this information with the memo at the request of Trustees.

Mary made a **motion** to approve allocating \$75,000 of non-CPA Trust funds for Closing Cost Assistance, raise the maximum amount of assistance from \$3,500 to \$5,000 per household, and make no other changes to the Trust's CCA program requirements. Donna seconded the motion and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote.

4. *Standing Business*

**Financial report(s) review: CPA account and non-CPA account (March, 2023).** Paul shared that the non-CPA financial report included the transfer of funds for rehab at SCC properties and the MVP city match, both of which are included as outstanding commitments. Paul noted an administrative item, which was that for the non-CPA account that the amount for the MVP's city match is \$1,000 less than what the City Council approved. Paul explained that is the result of an error during the transfer process, and the remaining \$1,000 will be transferred to the Trust's non-CPA account

For the CPA report, Paul noted that the FY23 CPA allocation, net of debt service, is now being shown as expected revenue. Paul further noted that the Community Preservation Committee at its March meeting voted to approve the allocation, and that once approved by the City Council the funds would be transferred to the Trust's CPA account.

Donna made a **motion** to accept the financial reports. Katie seconded the motion, and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote.

**Strategic Planning.** Paul shared that Jenn Goldson, of JM Goldson, had confirmed she is available to attend the May 11 Trust meeting, where the final Strategic Plan and revised funding applications can be presented to the Board. Paul noted that he had reviewed the latest draft strategic plan which was sent to Trustees last month, and would share his comments with Jenn. Paul noted that Jenn asked if Trustees do have any additional and final comments to the plan, that Paul transmit them to her by April 21<sup>st</sup>. Paul asked that any additional comments from Trustees be sent to him by April 20<sup>th</sup> and he will forward them to Jenn by the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Selected project updates (Municipal Voucher Program).** Paul shared that the committee evaluating proposals for a partner agency to administer MVP, which he has been serving on, is close to finalizing their choice for which agency to move forward with. The Cambridge Housing Authority and the Somerville Housing Authority both submitted proposals, and the committee will have a final decision by April 18.

**Other selected updates (Home Rule Petition, Board vacancies).** Paul noted that the Home Rule Petition has been reintroduced at the state house, and is currently awaiting a vote. Paul also shared that thanks to efforts on the part of Rep. Barber's office, there has been significant progress on moving the HRP to a vote, and there is hope it will be passed in an upcoming legislative session.

On the current vacancy on the Trust, Paul noted that the application period ended last week, on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Paul shared that one application was received, from a candidate who is highly interested in the position and in his opinion would be qualified to serve on the board. The Appointments Advisory Committee (AAC) has scheduled an interview with this candidate on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, which Paul will also participate in.

Paul further noted that the Mayor's office did make clear that their practice to interview at least two candidates for any open seat on a Board and Commission. The AAC will not make a recommendation until this requirement is met. Paul shared that he is working with the Communications department to re-post the notice of the open seat, in the hopes that at least one additional candidate will respond. Paul asked that if Trustees did have any suggestions for a potential candidate, that they share that information with him as soon as possible.

Trustees shared that during the training session offered by the Mayor's office regarding code of conduct for Board and Commission members that the administration was considering making some changes in order to make serving on a Board or Commission more attractive. These possible changes

included compensating Board members and providing services such as childcare and transportation to in person Board meetings.

5. *Communications*

Paul noted that the legislation which extended the ability of public Boards and Commissions to hold meetings remotely through at least 2025 was recently passed by the state legislature. Paul suggested that it may be beneficial for the Trust to have an in person meeting sometime in the near future. Some Trustees were in favor of a future in person meeting, while others expressed concern about their ability to attend an in person meeting due to professional and/or familial obligations. Paul noted that there is capacity to hold a hybrid meeting if necessary. Trustees asked that Paul look into the ability of the Trust to meet non-City property, and that parking should be considered when evaluating a potential in person meeting location.

6. *Adjournment*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 pm.

**Documents distributed:**

- Draft February 9 and March 9 meeting minutes
- Financial report(s)-CPA and non-CPA March, 2023
- Closing Cost Assistance memo and summary table
- Memo re: SHC request to transfer funds from its Leasing Differential program contract to its Tenancy Stabilization Program contract
- Draft Early Action Acquisition Fund application
- Presentation from Somerville YMCA on potential acquisition and redevelopment project