

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SOMERVILLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND

KATJANA BALLANTYNE

MAYOR

*Andrea Shapiro, Managing Trustee*

*Trustees*

Brielle Calderan

Mary Cassesso

Diane Cohen

Michael Feloney

Donna Haynes

Councilor Wilfred N. Mbah

Cassie Walston

**Minutes**

**Thursday, February 13, 2025 Meeting – 5:15 pm**

Trustees attending: Mary Cassesso, Brielle Calderan, Diane Cohen, Mike Feloney, Donna Haynes, Wil Mbah, Andrea Shapiro

Staff attending: Paul Goldstein, Becca Brooker, Alexis Turgeon (OSPCD Housing Division)

Members of the public attending: Noah Sawyer, Connor Ring (Just-A-Start), Ben Baldwin (Somerville Community Land Trust), Gonzalo Puigbo, Alba Solis, Laurie Calvert (Somerville Community Corporation)

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

*1. Trustee Update*

Paul Goldstein informed the Trustees that Donna Haynes, who had been serving in the Trust seat reserved for a professional in the field of banking or finance, had let him know she would be resigning from her seat following the December Trust meeting. Paul shared that he has begun the process of advertising the vacant seat, and would share additional information on those efforts later on in the meeting.

Mike Feloney shared that he had accepted a position outside of Somerville with a state agency, and his last day as Housing Director would be February 28<sup>th</sup>. Mike noted that Deputy Director of Housing Lisa Davidson will be the interim Director of Housing, and would likely assume Mike's seat on the Trust following confirmation from the Mayor's office. Trustees thanked Mike for his service to Somerville and to the Trust, and wished him well in his new position.

*2. Meeting Minutes review and approval (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024)*

Mary Cassesso made a **motion** to approve the December meeting minutes. Diane Cohen seconded the motion, and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll call vote.

*3. Financial report(s) review: CPA and non-CPA account (December, 2024 and January, 2025), and third quarter revenue projections*

Paul shared that as of January 31<sup>st</sup>, the Trust's non-CPA account has a little over \$1.9 million available for new commitments. That is not inclusive of the Early Action Acquisition Fund, which currently has a balance of \$3,347,117 available for new acquisition loans. In addition to scheduled loan repayments and bank interest, the non-CPA Trust account received a Fractional Payment in the

amount of just over \$300,000. Paul noted that there is a small typo on the January non-CPA report, the amount noted under “Linkage” for Revenue should have been in the cell for “Bank Interest”.

The Trust’s CPA account has just over \$1.2 million available for new commitments as of January 31<sup>st</sup>. Paul shared that he anticipates that for next month’s financial reports, the FY25 CPA allocation to the Trust will be carried under “Projected Revenue”. That amount will likely be between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million. There was a typo on the January financial reports, which also read December, 2024 in the header.

Through March 30, 2025 (the end of the third quarter of the 2025 fiscal year), the Trust is anticipated to receive just under \$760,000 in new revenue.

Mary made a **motion** to approve the financial reports, Mike seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by roll call vote.

#### 4. *New Business*

**Funding request: Acquisition loan for Just-A-Start and Somerville Community Land Trust project at 297 Medford Street.** Paul introduced Connor Ring and Noah Sawyer from Just-A-Start (JAS) and Ben Baldwin from the Somerville Community Land Trust (SCLT), who were in attendance to present a funding request to the Trust: \$3,350,000 of Early Action Acquisition Funds to assist with the purchase of a parcel located at 297 Medford Street. JAS and SCLT are forming a joint venture for the project, which they plan to develop into all affordable rental housing. The project was introduced to the Trustees at the December meeting.

The project team provided a brief presentation, which included an overview of the site and the past affordable housing work done by JAS and SCLT. For the joint venture, JAS will be providing the development and financial capacity, and SCLT will be handling the community outreach and public process. The finished project will contain approximately 50 units of affordable rental housing, serving households which earn between 30 and 60% of Area Median Income (AMI). The project team is planning to pursue a zoning change for the site, which will allow for additional floors to be constructed and will yield the planned 50 or so units. There are some existing environmental conditions at the site which will require remediation, but the project team is optimistic this will not be an issue based on preliminary test results. Assuming the acquisition can move forward, the project team is hoping that construction will begin in 2027. The project team is working on pursuing other funding sources for predevelopment costs, and have planned a community meeting about the project which will take place in March.

Trustee questions and responses offered by the project team included the following, with questions in italics followed by response information:

1. *Is the amount of planned units (~50) contingent on receiving approval for the change in zoning?* Yes. Under the current zoning, the project could likely support ~35 units. A zoning change would allow up to a 7-story building to be constructed.
2. *How did SCLT identify the site and identify a development partner in JAS?* A community activist brought the site to SCLT’s attention. Knowing that SCLT did not have the development capacity for a site of this size, they reached out to other larger community development organizations, including Preservation of Affordable Housing and Beacon Communities. Ultimately JAS was selected due to their record of success with other projects in the area, including a property located across the street (Next Step Housing).

3. *Is there an update on the status of the 24 Webster Ave project (another JAS development which received Trust funding), and will there be capacity to manage that project and the proposed project at 297 Medford Street?* The 24 Webster project is still working on securing funding resources at the state level, and that funding is expected to be available in 2025. The hope is that a construction closing will take place sometime during next summer. JAS has a large development team, and will have a dedicated project manager for each of its projects in Somerville.

The project team thanked the Trustees for their time, and left the meeting. Trustees proceeded to deliberate on the funding request. Trustees expressed support for the project, noting that an all-affordable development of this size with proximity to rapid transit is good to see in Somerville. Trustees also noted that this project may be a good opportunity to expand Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) resources in Somerville by requiring some of the units to carry a PSH designation. Andrea Shapiro reminded Trustees that the request being considered at tonight's meeting is just for the acquisition of a vacant site, and that the Trust would have an opportunity to revisit the possibility of a PSH requirement when/if the project requests additional Trust resources. City staff shared that they are facilitating conversations with local providers and stakeholders about the need for more PSH, and what steps can be taken to add to the City's existing PSH resources.

Diane made a **motion** to approve the funding request for \$3,350,000 of Early Action Acquisition Funds, contingent on the availability of funds to fund the entirety of the request, for the acquisition of 297 Medford Street by Just-A-Start and the Somerville Community Land Trust. The Managing Trustee will execute loan documents on behalf of the Trust during the closing process. Terms of the loan are as follows: a term of 3 years, with a 2.5% fixed interest rate. Interest payments will be made quarterly, starting six months following the closing date, and the loan will be paid back at the end of the term in conjunction with a final construction closing. The terms of the loan may be extended contingent on Trust approval. Any requests to extend the terms of the loan, or to request that the loan be converted to permanent subsidy, must be made to the Trust no later than 120 days before the maturity date.

Wil Mbah seconded the motion, and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll-call vote.

**Request from the Somerville Community Corporation for additional funds for its current 100 Homes Program Management contract.** Paul introduced Gonzalo Puigbo and Laurie Calvert from the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC), who were in attendance to present a request for additional Trust CPA funds for SCC's 100 Homes Program Management contract. The contract currently runs through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and SCC is requesting that an additional \$125,000 be added to the contract for the rest of its term.

Ms. Calvert noted that the original contract amount was \$250,000, and that the current balance is about \$20,000. SCC believes that an additional \$125,000 worth of funds for the contract will allow it to continue work to identify and bring online additional 100 Homes properties through the end of the current fiscal year (June 30, 2025).

Wil made a **motion** to approve SCC's request for an additional \$125,000 of CPA Trust funds for SCC's current 100 Homes Program Management contract. Diane seconded the motion, and the motion **passed** unanimously by roll-call vote.

5. *Standing Business (Board Reappointments and compensation for Board members)*

Paul shared some updates regarding the two vacancies on the Trust. Paul noted that the Appointments Advisory Committee (AAC) will be interviewing two candidates for the seat reserved for a member of a Somerville non-profit that was previously held by David Gibbs. Following those interviews a recommendation will be made to the Mayor by the AAC for the preferred candidate.

Paul also noted that a notice of a vacancy for the seat formerly held by Donna Haynes, which is reserved for a professional in the field of banking or finance, was made public last week. The vacancy is being advertised in the Somerville Times and is posted across the City's communications platforms, including the Trust's website.

The last item Paul shared for Standing Business was regarding proposed compensation for members of City Boards/Commissions. At the City Council Finance Committee meeting last month, Human Resources recommended a new compensation scale for members of Boards/Commissions. This included stipends for Boards/Commissions which were previously uncompensated, such as the Trust. The recommendation presented to the Finance Committee was that Trustees receive an annual stipend of \$6,000 for their time on the Board. Paul emphasized that this recommendation is not final, and will have to be approved by City Council at some point. Paul noted he did not have any indication about whether the proposed amount will change, or end up being approved, but he felt it was important that the current members of the Trust are aware of this potential change. Additional updates will be provided as they become available.

6. *Communications and Announcements*

Paul explained that he had prepared an Annual Calendar for the Trustees that included relevant dates such as monthly meetings, but forgot to include it with meeting materials. Paul indicated the calendar will be circulated to Trustees immediately after tonight's meeting.

Paul shared some information which was presented by Somerville's Anti Displacement Taskforce to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council about the Taskforce's initiatives and recommendations. Among that information was an update on the progress Trust funded flexible rental assistance programs are making to prevent displacement in Somerville. A couple of years ago, the Trust accepted an allocation of funds from the City which were to be set aside for flexible rental assistance programs that previously had been funded by ARPA. Over the last two years, these programs have prevented well over 300 evictions, with just over \$1.3 million in assistance provided by the Trust funds that have been set aside for these programs

Paul introduced Becca Brooker to the Trustees. Becca recently began work for the Housing Division in the role of Housing Development Program Manager, which was previously held by Alexis Turgeon. Alexis is now serving as the City's Housing Grants Manager.

7. *Adjournment*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 PM.

**Documents distributed:**

- Draft December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Financial Reports for December, 2024 and January, 2025 (CPA and non-CPA)
- Quarter 3 revenue projections
- Funding application for 297 Medford St. from JAS and SCLT
- Memo from SCC re: request for additional funds for its 100 Homes Program Management contract