

**Arlington Affordable Housing Trust Fund  
Board of Trustees**

Date: November 20, 2025  
Time: 7:00 – 8:00 PM  
Location: Conducted via remote participation

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Conducted via remote participation

Trustees Present: Karen Kelleher, Kerry Sheehan, Jaclyn Pacejo, Eric Helmuth, Brandon Tower (non-voting).

Town Staff Present: Sarah Suarez

Karen called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 P.M.

### **1. Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 23, 2025**

The minutes were previously distributed.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion to approve the minutes was voted upon with a roll-call vote, with all members voting in favor of approving the minutes.

### **2. Guest Speaker- Benji Kemper, Center for Working and Living**

Benji Kemper: Center for Working and Living (CWL) works with people with disabilities with the goal of creating affordable, accessible housing. Many can't afford accessible units and this imposes substantial obstacles for day-to-day tasks.

CWL is working to ensure that 10% of housing built in Worcester is suitable for those who need accessible housing. "Accessible" refers to those in a wheelchair. Eric requested further details. This policy applies to the Worcester Affordable Housing Trust Fund distributions. 10% refers to the units being reserved for people using wheelchairs. Vacated units must be made available to the population requiring accessible housing, which is almost always filled. If no one fills the vacancy, it can be given to someone without accessibility needs.

It's much easier to create accessible units in new construction, because it can be hard to retrofit old units to accommodate accessibility needs. CWL is pushing for funding to be available at the state level for accessible housing.

Karen: If the trust wanted to implement a similar policy, the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) could make this a funding priority without codifying a formal policy. However, accessible housing is more expensive to build, so it may drive up costs. Incentives might work better than "sticks" in this context.

Benji: Boston has a slightly different policy, namely, 10% of elevator buildings, which is most buildings in the city. The CWL is attempting to work with trust funds across the state.

Jaclyn/Eric: Both agree it's important to keep this issue "front and center" and make sure Arlington prioritizes this kind of housing.

### **3. Action Plan Implementation**

#### **A. Create More Affordable Housing - Developer RFP Update from Working Group**

Karen: Jaclyn has taken over leadership of this effort, which in its current form is more of an RFI.

Jaclyn: The RFI has not changed substantially since the last meeting, but it's now easier to read. Next steps include distributing a survey to developers across the state. Looking to get feedback from various groups around town and Town Council. Don't have a way to securely store financial data, so will seek to get general information about revenue. Also asking about the nature of projects the developer does, including prior affordable developments they've done. The goal is to keep the survey easy and able to be completed within 15 minutes.

Karen: Outreach efforts should include reaching out to stakeholders frequently involved in affordable housing advocacy. It should be sent to those groups providing notice of the survey's existence and offering opportunity to provide feedback if they wish. On track to send out surveys before year's end.

Jaclyn: Asking for submissions on a certain date, but it's not incentivized. Responses will be accepted on a rolling basis after the suggested submission deadline.

#### **B. Build the Financial Strength of the Trust**

##### ***a. CDBG Funding Applications Opens Nov. 21***

##### ***b. Financial Committee Funding Request***

Karen: Submitted a total request for \$45,000. One request for \$20,000 and another for \$25,000 with the representation that we would seek funding from other sources. We do not currently know if we will receive funding. This might support a goal of ensuring funded projects include 10% accessible housing. In the future, the AHT will engage with the relevant groups to discuss this possibility. Subsequent outreach to FinCom members could be beneficial to discuss AHT's work.

Eric: The request is a good idea. FinCom has to consider the ramifications of this kind of request on the established budget. However, if the request is denied, we can consider drafting a warrant article. The amount requested is not substantial.

Karen: We should explore other funding strategies that have been pursued by other affordable housing trusts. Might need to conduct legal research and/or engage with state delegation.

Brandon: Volunteered to join the sub-committee.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, Brandon Tower was approved as a member of the Financial Strength of the Trust Working Group on a unanimous rollcall vote.

#### *c. Fundraising/Private Giving Strategy*

Karen: Don't want to compete with HCA's fundraising efforts, but can pursue very different strategies.

#### **4. Update on Affordable Housing Overlay District Committee**

Karen: Beth presented last night at a public meeting.

Sarah: Two presentations this week. First was with the Redevelopment Board (ARB) on Monday night. The focus of this first community forum was engaging the public and talking about the financing aspect of affordable housing. It's not as simple as "just building it." Beth put together several slides and presented about the low income housing tax credit (LIHTC) and tried to explain it in a way that everyone could understand. The second part of the presentation was about identifying properties the Affordable Housing Overlay District (AHOD) committee went and scouted. The AHOD committee is committed to looking at specific properties that are a certain size or location that might make them better for a LIHTC deal.

The second meeting was on Zoom with about 30 people. Most people had positive feedback. They liked the financing primer and why to be successful the overlay district has to be designed in a way that affordable housing developers can leverage. No dimensional standards set up yet or other incentives, but discussion about this will happen soon.

Another meeting to come with the ARB on December 15. Need to discuss soon because warrant articles open shortly. Need to know ARB's position because without their support it would be difficult to move forward.

ARB is concerned about not having mixed-use be part of the overlay. Beth explained it is very difficult financially with commercial space in these developments. Want to make sure houses selected for inclusion in overlay make sense in the context of the space they are built.

Might do a presentation to AHT during the December meeting.

Karen: Progress made this fast is impressive. This is one of the actions that is in our action plan and could be supported by a number of town constituencies. We might need to discuss the plan with developers to know if they'll be drawn to opportunities to build under this overlay provision.

Sarah: Incentivizing taller developments has helped the cause of accessibility because those buildings tend to include elevators.

Kerry: Accessible housing will always be more expensive and it may never be the “perfect time” to build it.

Karen: The proposal contemplates projects that are 100% affordable. This might miss an opportunity to do things like use market rate housing to cross-subsidize the affordable units. A target closer to 70% would still be a large amount of accessible units and can help address the “missing middle” housing gap . This would also provide for a more inclusionary slate of housing options in town.

Sarah: Cambridge and Somerville affordable housing overlays both require 100% of units to be affordable. Brookline is also trying to set their standard at 100% as well.

Karen: Cambridge affordability threshold is 120% of AMI. At some point, we should anticipate voting on whether to support the AHOD proposal.

## **5. New Business**

Sarah: Arlington adopted a MBTA Communities district. Subsequently, many applications have come in for projects of different sizes. Some are going back and forth with the ARB including a 5-story project at 126 Broadway.

Density bonuses can be achieved in two ways. One is to provide commercial space on the ground floor and the second is providing at least 22.5% of units as affordable. This project has commercial space. Question regarding the calculation, because with 14 units, 22.% is 3.14. Arlington zoning bylaws suggest the project should round down, which would require 3 affordable units for this project. ARB didn't agree, so it's an open question whether we should round up or down. Some ARB members believe the intent of the MBTA Communities by-law was to achieve a full 22.5% and would require rounding up. ARB is also split on how you calculate gross floor area for the commercial space.

The second project is on Grafton Street. The Applicant proposed 6 units, which triggers inclusionary zoning by-law. The problem is for units, they're all one bedroom units, and according to 40B, one-bedroom units must be 700 feet to be included in the Subsidized Housing Index. ARB considered going down to 5 units, which would take away an affordable housing unit. The developer has the option to make an “in lieu of “ payment to the housing trust instead of providing the unit of affordable housing.

Karen: MBTA Communities zoning will "unleash" the power of the inclusionary zoning by-law. The AHT should have a position on how this by-law is applied in a reasonable, sustainable way that helps the proliferation of affordable housing. The AHT should consider drafting a written position on the issue and articulate a position for ARB about how these tensions in the application of zoning by-laws are resolved.

Sarah: Construction on the Sunnyside project is set to begin shortly.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:00PM**