

1 **Approved September 5, 2024**

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3 **THE SOUTHBOROUGH HOUSING OPPORTUNITY PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**
4 **(SHOPC)**

5 **MEETING MINUTES**

6 **Thursday, June 6, 2024, 7:00 PM**

7 **ZOOM MEETING/REMOTE PARTICIPATION**

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9 Members present: Doriann Jasinski, Jesse Stein, Paul Desmond, Al Hamilton; John Wood joined
10 at 7:06.

11 Absent: Doug Manz, Tom Bhisitkul

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13 **CALL TO ORDER:**

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15 The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM

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18 **MINUTES:**

19 Minutes for Feb. 27, 2024 were approved.

20 Motion to approve minutes: Jesse Stein. Seconded: Paul Desmond.

21 Roll Call Vote: Desmond-AYE; Stein-AYE; Hamilton-AYE; Jasinski-AYE; vote passed unanimously.

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23 Minutes for March 7, 2024 were approved.

24 Motion to approve minutes: Jesse Stein. Seconded: Paul Desmond.

25 Roll Call Vote: Desmond-AYE; Stein-AYE; Hamilton-AYE; Jasinski-AYE; vote passed unanimously.

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27 Minutes for March 27, 2024 were approved.

28 Motion to approve minutes: Jesse Stein. Seconded: Paul Desmond.

29 Roll Call Vote: Desmond-AYE; Stein-AYE; Jasinski-AYE; Hamilton-ABSTAINED; vote passed 3-0,
30 one abstention.

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32 **NEW BUSINESS:**

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34 **Proposal to merge SHOPC and the AHTF**

35 Discussion took place about proposal to create a new entity that would effectively merge
36 SHOPC and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF). Hamilton noted the current structure is
37 not working, as no affordable housing has been built in 10 years. Consultants have also opined
38 that Southborough has too many committees and not enough volunteers to serve on them, so a
39 new, streamlined committee makes sense. The idea is to create a working group to define the
40 new group and put a proposal before fall Town Meeting.

41
42 Jasinski said Andrew Dennington and Al Hamilton will represent the Select Board on the
43 working group. Lisa Braccio, who proposed the idea, will also serve. Both Jasinski and Desmond
44 expressed interest in representing SHOPC on the new working group.

Stein motioned to appoint Jasinski and Desmond to represent SHOPC on the exploratory committee re merging SHOPC and AHTF. Wood seconded.

Roll call vote: Desmond-AYE; Stein-AYE; Hamilton-AYE; Wood-AYE; Jasinski-AYE
Vote passed unanimously.

Options for building affordable housing

Discussion ensued on the process for engaging builders on affordable housing projects. Jasinski read an email from SHOPC member Doug Manz, who had contacted two affordable housing developers. His email reported on his initial findings, including:

- Projects need to be 30-40 units to be feasible
- Use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits in capitalization of projects
- Town typically provides the land for projects, along with some funding, on the order of \$20,000 per unit
- Lack of town sewer is a complexity; one developer would decline to be involved in such projects
- Both groups advised the town work with a consultant and noted they favor projects with strong support from the town, including securing the land and committing to additional funding
- Affordable housing projects can be part of market rate projects, a percentage of units are earmarked as affordable

Jasinski noted both developers would be amenable to attending a SHOPC meeting to provide additional information.

Hamilton noted that he ran some rough numbers that indicate the town would need to put up around \$1.2 million to procure 4 acres of land required for a 30-unit project, along with an additional subsidy of \$600,000 to \$900,000 (\$20,000 to \$30,000 per unit), plus potentially subsidizing septic, likely putting the total at more than \$2 million. Counting all available funds for affordable housing, the town currently has a little under \$1 million, he said, all of which may not be available. He also noted Town Meeting would have to approve the transfer of any town-owned land to the AHTF.

Stein asked about land around Neary School. Hamilton mentioned wetlands in the areas and other challenges related to using it for something other than a school but said it's worth asking questions.

Wood suggested connecting with members of the Framingham Housing Authority, which built affordable housing units and rented them to the state as Section 8 housing, which count as "true" affordable housing, not 40B. The Housing Authority acts as landlord. Developers can help with this, including helping find state money.

Desmond talked about need to be ready when property becomes available, noting we weren't for the Northboro Rd. 61A property. He also spoke to the need to make affordable housing a priority that we're willing to invest in, noting it is an investment because any units we build will generate tax revenue going forward.

Jasinski suggested having different groups or individuals attend future meetings to help educate SHOPC on how best to approach projects, what the options are, and so on. She will try to get someone to attend the next meeting.

Update on Northboro Road, 61A property

The status of the offer from the buyer interested in building a solar farm is still unclear.

Hamilton said town counsel has sent letters saying the town doesn't think the offer qualifies as a bona fide offer but has yet to hear back. He expects the solar farm company will have to go through a lengthy approval process of a year or two with the state and town before the property title changes. If the town was to exercise its option to match the offer, it does appear the town would have to buy the entire property, at a price of more than \$5 million.

Desmond asked about timeframe, including the 120-day window when the town has the right to make a matching offer, and whether the town can still make an offer until title changes hands. Hamilton noted that when the 120-day clock starts is an open question that may have to be settled in court.

Other business

Jasinski noted this was John Wood's last meeting, as term has expired, and thanked him for his service.

Date for next meeting was tentatively set for July 11, 7 p.m.

Hamilton provided a brief update on the Atwood Road property, noting consultants are coming to look at property and drill holes for ledge testing. Results will probably be delivered sometime in July or August.

ADJOURN: Desmond moved to adjourn at 7:52 PM. Seconded by Stein.

Roll call vote: Desmond-AYE; Stein-AYE; Hamilton-AYE; Wood-AYE; Jasinski-AYE

Vote passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul Desmond

SHOPC Vice-Chair