



The City of **WORCESTER**

**Affordable Housing Trust Fund
Board of Trustees**

**Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 18, 2023, 6:00 PM
Esther Howland Chamber, City Hall**

Virtual/remote participation via Webex:

Phone: 1-415-655-0001 **Access Code:** 2302 720 5450 #

<https://cow.webex.com/cow/j.php?MTID=mdcf1e063f8d187dfa333b18b7842c206>

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees Present:

Victor Agudelo-Ortiz, Chair
James Brooks, Ex-Officio
Lucelia DeJesus
Johanna Hampton Dance
Keith Krikorian
Benetta Kuffour (remote participation)
Gabriel Rodriguez
Xaulanda Thorpe

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees Absent:

Jackson Restrepo

Staff Present:

Jeanette Tozer, Affordable Housing Trust Fund Manager

1. Call to Order

Mr. Agudelo-Ortiz called the meeting to order with a roll call at 6:03 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes from December 14, 2022 Meeting

Mr. Brooks made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Hampton Dance seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved 8-0 on a roll call.

3. AHTF Application Review and Approval – Curtis Apartments Phase 1 – Request for \$2,00,000 for Affordable Rental Housing Development Project

Mr. Agudelo-Ortiz introduced the agenda item. Ms. Tozer provided an overview of the application from Trinity Financial, in partnership with the Worcester Housing Authority (WHA), for \$2,000,000 of AHTF funding for Phase 1 of the overall redevelopment of the WHA's Curtis Apartments. The proposed project consists of 129 units in two buildings, of which 90 units are replacement public housing units and 39 are additional affordable units at 60% and 80% of area median income (AMI). The AHTF funding was being sought for the 39 new units. Ms. Tozer then directed the Board to their packet, which included a summary of the scores that the Board of Trustees gave to the Curtis Apartments Phase 1 application. Ms. Tozer noted that the summary shows the average score for each criterion as both a number and a percentage of possible points. She further noted that no minimum score has been established to award funding, but based on the proposed matrix, a project scoring below 91 points would require additional scrutiny to ensure the project is feasible and meets the intent of the AHTF. Based on the scores submitted, the average total score was 117.2 out of a possible 150 points, or 78.7% of the potential points. The meeting was then opened for public comment.

Michael Lozano, Vice President with Trinity Financial, provided a few brief remarks regarding the proposed project, noting that the requested \$2,000,000 will leverage over \$80,000,000 of other funding, and thanked the Board of Trustees for considering their application. Benji Kemper, community organizer for the Center for Living & Working, then spoke, noting the need for accessible, affordable housing in the city of Worcester. Robert Bilotta, Center for Living & Working board member, spoke about the severe need for accessible and adaptable public housing and encouraged increased efforts to foster accessible housing through the AHTF and in the Curtis Apartments project. Joe Bellil, VP of Public Affairs & Youth Services for Easter Seals Massachusetts, also spoke about the need for accessible housing units, and encouraged the AHTF to increase accessible units to 20% as well as ensure that units are adaptable. David Sullivan, Director of Economic Development and Business Recruitment at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, spoke in favor of the application from Trinity Financial. Mike Kennedy, ADA access coordinator for the Center for Living & Working, encouraged the AHTF to require that projects have 20% accessible units with the remainder being adaptable. Steve Solberg, Center for Living & Working, spoke in favor of increasing accessible units. Steve Wage commended the applicant for committing to 100% adaptable units and advocated for 20% accessible units. Steve Teasdale, Executive Director of the Main South CDC, encouraged the AHTF to increase the points awarded for accessible units as well as bonus funding for accessible and adaptable units, currently set at \$25,000 per unit, to help offset additional costs associated with creating accessible units and providing ADA access in residential structures.

Mr. Agudelo-Ortiz turned the meeting over to the Board of Trustees to discuss the application. Members of the Board engaged in a discussion about accessible housing units both generally and specific to the Curtis Apartments project. Board members inquired about costs associated with constructing accessible and adaptable units, and Mr. Teasdale noted that costs are on a case-by-case basis, but there are often additional costs associated with site and egress issues to provide accessibility. Mr. Lozano also noted that the existing Curtis Apartments have zero accessibility, and the costs for constructing the four elevators for the redeveloped apartments in Phase 1 alone is about \$2 million. Further Board discussion focused on the process and timeline associated with

providing accommodations for tenants residing in adaptable units as well as relocation for current tenants.

Mr. Agudelo-Ortiz motioned that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund authorizes its chair to execute a letter of conditional commitment to Trinity Curtis Phase One Limited Partnership for ARPA Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund funding in the amount of \$2,000,000 for the Trinity Curtis Phase 1 affordable rental housing development project. The conditional commitment shall be valid for nine months and subject to the approved Affordable Housing Trust Fund requirements. Ms. Hampton Dance seconded the motion. The motion passed with seven (7) votes in favor and one (1) against on a roll call:

James Brooks - Aye
Lucelia DeJesus - Aye
Johanna Hampton Dance - Aye
Keith Krikorian - Aye
Benetta Kuffour - Aye
Gabriel Rodriguez - Aye
Xaulanda Thorpe - No
Victor Agudelo-Ortiz - Aye

4. AHTF Outreach

Ms. Tozer provided an overview of City efforts to promote the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to developers, particularly smaller-scale developers. Efforts have included the establishment of the AHTF webpage on the City website; issuance of a press release for the RFP; staff attendance at the City's Interdepartmental Review Team (IRT) pre-development consultations; presentations and attendance at events including the City's October 2022 Housing Programs Info Session, the Chamber's Construction and Real Estate Roundtable event in November 2022, and the Economic Development Summit held in December 2022. In addition, MassHousing, through their Equitable Business Development Division, undertook a statewide Emerging Developer Listening Tour in the fall of 2022 to identify opportunities, disparities and solutions to increase Black, Indigenous and People of Color developer participation in the affordable housing ecosystem. City staff attended the session in Worcester to promote the AHTF, and staff intend to leverage similar events and opportunities. Mr. Brooks noted that the AHTF is also promoted through the Board of Realtor's government affairs committee on a monthly basis.

5. Financial Update

Ms. Tozer provided the Board with a financial update. She noted that the AHTF appropriation account will be set up when the City's new financial system launches in the near future. The Budget Office prefers to wait until the new system is live to create the appropriation account to make things cleaner, particularly because there is no immediate need for payments. The Board will receive monthly financial reports to ensure transparency once the account is created, and the financial updates will include regular revenue and expenditure reports that clearly account for sources - initially this will be ARPA funding only, but eventually Community Preservation Act and Inclusionary Zoning payments - as well as expenditures by project.

6. Potential future agenda items

The Board agreed to the following future agenda items: discussion regarding how to better entice the inclusion of accessible and adaptable units in future projects; evaluating bonus funding criteria and amounts; and a discussion with the accessible housing advocacy community.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.