

DATE: September 3, 2021
TIME: 10:06 AM

Belmont Housing Trust
August 26, 2021

Attending: Rachel Heller, Betsy Lipson, Judie Feins, Judy Singler, Paul Rickter, Madeline Fraser Cook, Gloria Leipzig

Town Employees: Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator and Robert Hummel, Senior Planner

Members of the Public: Lisa Pargoli

The emergency meeting was held to discuss the Housing Trust spending \$18,000 to assist households, displaced from their homes at 125 Trapelo Road, in obtaining new housing.

Rachel began the meeting with an update on the situation. 75 people have been displaced due to structural damage to the building. The Town, State, and private fundraising have helped 9 households, who had no other place to go, to stay in a hotel as they await word on when or if they will be able to return to their homes. Metro Housing Boston is working with the 9 households in the hotel and other households who lived in the building to help them find new housing.

Patrice discussed how the Town has assisted the displaced households. In particular, Jon Marshall has dedicated an incredible amount of hours to working with the state, Metro Housing Boston, and volunteers in Belmont to assist the displaced households and to attempt to get information from the property management company regarding the condition of the building. Patrice explained that the decision to evacuate the building was made by the property management company and not the Town. The Town has no role to play at this point. Although, Patrice continues to call the property management company to get information. Patrice also explained that the Town cannot sustain the level of assistance they are providing.

Gloria provided information on the households who have been displaced. Six of the households staying in the hotel are eligible for state emergency rental assistance programs and other state and federal housing assistance programs. Two of the households have extremely low incomes and are eligible for state family shelter if they are unable to find new homes.

Rachel added that there is a need to provide financial assistance to households who are not eligible for state emergency rental assistance. There are households who have incomes below 100% of the Area Median Income who do not have the funds they need to move into new housing, including security deposits, broker fees, and last month's rent.

Gloria explained that the Housing Trust has \$18,000 from developers of housing that was developed on Clark Street years ago. It wasn't clear if the housing fell under the Town's inclusionary zoning policy and the developers paid \$25,000 to the Housing Trust to help further the Trust's work in Belmont. Some funds have been used over time and \$18,000 remain. Rachel added that the funds can be used flexibly so long as the Housing Trust approves the use.

Betsy made a motion to use the \$18,000 for 1st month, last month, security deposits, and other move in costs. Tomi seconded. The vote was unanimous.

A discussion followed regarding how the funds would be administered, if the funds should be used for forgivable loans, if it is the role of the Trust to provide this level of assistance, what kind of responsibility the owners of the building and the owners of the cell tower equipment have, and additional actions the

Town could take to ensure that those responsible for the structural damage provide compensation to the households who have been displaced. Members also discussed if it would be possible for the Housing Trust to have the responsible parties pay the Housing Trust back for the assistance provided to the households. Members agreed that the Trust should not pursue reimbursement as it is unlikely that any funds would be recovered for the Housing Trust and that it will take some time for the displaced households to work through legal challenges to be compensated for their losses. Tomi suggested the Housing Trust push harder for answers on accountability and when or if the building is safe for people to return. Tomi agreed to begin drafting a letter on behalf of the Housing Trust to the property management company. Rachel agreed to help draft the letter.

A discussion was held regarding the parameters under which the \$18,000 could be used to assist households in moving into new housing. Rachel recommended that Metro Housing Boston administer the program because they have a proven track record of running similar programs and they have been working directly with the displaced households. They have done income verifications and have case managers working with every household who needs help in finding new homes. Gloria proposed paying an administrative fee to Metro Housing Boston for all of the work they are doing to help each household find new homes.

Rachel moved that the Housing Trust provide \$18,000 to Metro Housing Boston to run a program to assist displaced households from 125 Trapelo in moving into new housing.

- Eligible applicants must have incomes at or below 100% of the area median income.
- Eligible applicants must not be eligible for RAFT and other state emergency rental assistance programs.
- Grants may be made of up to \$2,500 per eligible household.
- Grants may be used for first month's rent, last month's rent, security deposits, broker fees, or related move-in costs.
- Grants will be made to eligible households with a preference for households moving into permanent housing.
- Grants will be made to people who were renting at 125 Trapelo.
- The \$18,000 includes an administrative payment to Metro Housing Boston in the amount of \$100 per household assisted.
- Any unused funds shall be returned to the Housing Trust.

Judie seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting concluded at 11:00 am.

Submitted: Rachel Heller