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Governor Signs Westborough Town Charter Amendment

Amendment will boost affordable housing development efforts

(BOSTON – 5/2/2023) On Tuesday, Governor Maura Healey signed a bill amending Westborough’s town charter to promote affordable housing production by opening the door for the Westborough Affordable Housing Trust to make appointments to the Housing Partnership Committee. This authority, if granted by the Select Board, would allow the Trust the flexibility to function as the Housing Partnership Committee or restructure the body to include both members of the Trust and members of the public. This effort hopes to keep the Housing Partnership Committee fully staffed and able to assist private developers who wish to build affordable housing projects as they work through local permitting processes.

The charter amendment hopes to revitalize the Housing Partnership Committee, which has recently suffered from numerous vacant seats, denying the body a quorum to meet or act. Currently, Committee members are appointed by the Select Board. The enactment of this bill allows the Westborough Affordable Housing Trust to act as an appointing or reforming agency for the Committee if the Select Board grants them the authority to do so, an authority it can reclaim at any time.

This bill, H.4202 – *An Act amending the Charter of the Town of Westborough*, was championed in the Massachusetts Legislature by Senator Michael Moore and Representatives Kate Donaghue and Hannah Kane. Its passage comes as a result of a home rule petition submitted by the Town of Westborough, which approved the language during the community’s October 2023 Town Meeting under Articles 16 and 17.

“This bill will allow Westborough to continue to pursue its affordable housing goals by allowing those who already intimately know the scope of the area’s housing crisis to lead the committee whose task it is to promote real, concrete solutions,” said **Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury)**. “I’m proud to have worked with my

colleagues Representative Donaghue and Representative Kane to move this bill through the Legislature and onto Governor Healey’s desk. I look forward to seeing this action take effect and help bring housing to Westborough for those who feel increasingly squeezed out by rising rent and home prices.”

“Thank you to Senator Moore and Representative Kane for their efforts with this legislation,” said **Representative Kate Donaghue (D-Westborough)**. “I appreciate their partnership and am thankful to Governor Healey for signing this bill which will help the Affordable Housing Trust and the Housing Partnership Committee as we look to support affordable housing in Westborough.”

“By providing the Westborough Affordable Housing Trust with more flexibility, H4202 will put Westborough in a better position to achieve the town's housing goals,” said **Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury)**. “I am glad that this bill has been signed into law, and was pleased to work with Representative Donaghue and Senator Moore to expedite passage through the Legislature.”

“This legislation will allow the Westborough Affordable Housing Trust to address the housing needs within Westborough by providing a more effective and efficient structure for supporting developers who are creating properties that include affordable residential units. The Trust is extremely grateful for the support of Senator Moore, and Representatives Donaghue and Kane in ushering this Home Rule Petition through the General Court and for the support of Governor Healey,” said **Edward Behn, Westborough Affordable Housing Trust Chair**.

The Housing Partnership Committee was established to encourage the development of well-designed and well-built affordable homes in Westborough. By helping private developers utilize the Local Initiative Program and navigate the town’s permitting processes, the Committee is intended to ease the process of affordable home development and make Westborough more attractive to developers who are seeking to build these types of homes.

The mission of the Westborough Affordable Housing Trust is to create and preserve public affordable housing units in Westborough and to improve broad housing affordability in the community. The Trust generally does this work through partnerships with local and state government officials.

Having passed both Legislative chambers and having been signed by the Governor, the bill is enacted into law and Westborough’s town charter is amended.

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