

Truro Housing Authority Draft Recommendations for Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (March 20, 2025 DRAFT)

Background:

At the 2022 ATM, Town Meeting voted to adopt MGL c.44 Sec.55C that allows the town to establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund (MAHT). Voters approved adopting all the powers for a MAHT as specified in the statute.

In April of 2024, the Select Board authorized the Housing Authority to do a study of MAHTs and make recommendations for establishment of a Truro Municipal Affordable Housing Trust. (Those Draft Recommendations are below.)

Process:

The Truro Housing Authority (THA) hired a consultant to do a study of all the Outer Cape Towns' Affordable Housing Trusts. The consultant, Michele Jarusiewicz, submitted that report in February 2025.

The THA also invited Shelly Goehring, Mass. Housing Partnership (MHP) to outline how MAHTs operated and best practices to attend a question and answer session with THA members and the public. Shelly is MHP's expert on Municipal Affordable Housing Trusts, she has published several Guides to Creating Municipal Affordable Housing Trusts and has served as an advisor for a number of Massachusetts communities on the issue.

THA held a listening session for the public to talk about their suggestions related to the structure of a MAHT in Truro. A public hearing is scheduled for April 2nd on the committee's draft recommendations.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Membership:

Number of members: 5 voting members, town manager or designee (non-voting), and 2 alternates.

Alternates may participate in debate, they may vote when a member is absent, and they can not automatically become a member when there is an opening.

Members' Terms: MGL c. 44 Sec.55 states that terms shall be two years. While staggered terms are preferred, the statute requires two year terms and it would take a home rule act to change to change these terms.

Trust Composition:

The MAHT statute requires all members of the MAHT must be appointed by the Select Board.

- Town Manager or designee as a non-voting member
- A Select Board member (as mandated by the statute)
- A Housing Authority member as recommended by THA and appointed by Select Board
- All appointees (except for town manager or designee must be full-time residents except the Select Board may appoint one part-time resident)

The Select Board should consider the appointment of people with certain skills, education and employment such as a developer (people who develop affordable housing, in particular), someone with a financial services background, a realtor or an attorney with expertise with land use or real estate law, etc.

The Select Board should consider the appointment of at least one member to the Trust who either rents or owns affordable housing in Truro or has experienced housing insecurity.

All members should have a demonstrated commitment to the development and advocacy for affordable housing.

Powers:

We concur with the vote at Town Meeting which accepted the powers outlined in the statute. We encourage the future Trust to work with a consultant's or expert's assistance to come up with a mission and vision statement, policies and procedures, and review the powers to ensure that they fit with Truro culture and best practices.

The Select Board must be consulted if any gift, grant, purchase, or other action would significantly impact the Town's budget or Town employees' workload.

Establishment of the Trust + Funding:

Complete a Declaration of Trust.

Transfer all AMI Restricted Funds in the existing Affordable Housing Account into the MAHT and all new AMI Restricted Funds related to housing should go to MAHT including the funding for programs such as rental assistance, down payment assistance, maintenance and monitoring of affordable housing, preservation of deed-restricted housing, etc.

The existing Affordable Housing Account should continue to function and to receive and distribute funding for non-AMI restricted projects, until the establishment of a Truro Seasonal Communities Trust Fund or another Trust Fund is established to fund non-AMI restricted projects.

We recommend that there is adequate staff support with the work with the MAHT.

Training and continuing education should be made available to the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust and taken advantage of by its members.

Transparency:

The Trust will comply with all reporting requirements. Semi-annual report of activities, funds received, funds expended shall be available to the Select Board and the public on Town website and in print at town hall.

The MAHT shall create a complete accounting of the use of CPC funds and to assure that CPC has the information they need to complete on a timely basis the mandated reporting to the State of Massachusetts.

All discussions, documents, etc. shall be public except those that are related to the negotiations around acquisition of property, etc.

All meetings of the MAHT are hybrid in order to maximize participation and transparency.

All policies related to the operation of the MAHT shall be public and be available on the MAHT's Truro website.