

Winchester Affordable Housing Trust 2025 Annual Report to Town Meeting

About the Trust:

- Authorized by Town Meeting in 2019 with a mandate to “provide for the preservation and creation of affordable housing in the Town of Winchester for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households.”
- Mission: The mission of the Affordable Housing Trust(AHT) is to support and sustain an inclusive and socioeconomically diverse community consistent with the policy objectives of the most recent Winchester Housing Production Plan through investment, education and advocacy.
- Membership: One Select Board member, the Town Manager, one member appointed by Winchester Housing Partnership, and up to six members appointed by the Select Board. The Trust currently has eight members.
- The AHT has a different focus than the Town’s Housing Partnership Board. The Housing Partnership is focused on housing policy and strategy, providing advice and recommendations to Town Meeting and Town Boards on proposed developments and policy initiatives.
- In contrast, Municipal Housing Trusts, like AHT, are more project and development oriented. Over 140 towns in Massachusetts have created Trusts to take direct action to create more affordable housing.
- When it was established, the AHT received startup funding of \$1,000,000 from the Select Board Housing Fund. These funds are managed by the Town Treasurer. There is no budget item or ongoing revenue source for the Trust.

2025 Significant Activities:

160 Forest Street. Fall 2024 Town Meeting authorized the Select Board to accept title to the property at 160 Forest Street and restrict it for affordable housing. The property was left to the Town in the will of Marsha Chase Rice.

At the request of the Select Board, the AHT developed a plan to put this vacant, deteriorating property to use as affordable housing. The property will be restricted to occupancy by households below 80% of Boston Area Median Income. The AHT’s efforts during 2025 have included working with the Housing Corporation of Arlington and Town Counsel on the required affordability restriction, investigating the physical condition of the property, contracting for a topographic and property line survey, touring

the property with contractors to get input, convening a community forum to explain the project and get feedback, hiring a project management consultant, performing a feasibility review, and analyzing the availability of financial resources. The AHT submitted an application for CPA funding in August and has committed up to \$250,000 of its funds, if needed, to support the project.

Two articles at Fall 2025 Town Meeting will support the implementation of the plan for 160 Forest Street and allow it to move forward. Article 28 recommends \$350,000 in CPA funding and Article 29 transfers care, custody, control, and ownership to the Trust.

An information sheet about 160 Forest Street is attached to this report.

CPA implementation. CPA funding is the predominant source of local funding for affordable housing across the Commonwealth. The Trust strongly supported the passage of Winchester's CPA in November 2024 and, during 2025, collaborated with the Housing Partnership Board to appoint one of the members of the WCCP which oversees the implementation of CPA.

Waterfield Commons. In 2022, the Trust committed a \$500,000 loan to support the feasibility of the Waterfield Commons mixed income development and demonstrate local financial support - a key rating criteria for state funding. During 2025, the Trust continued to advocate for state and federal funding and in July 2025, Gov. Healey announced funding had been awarded. AHT will work with the development team to finalize the loan terms and looks forward to a construction start in 2026.

Washington/Swanton. In 2024, the Trust committed up to \$350,000 in combined loan and grant funding to help address the environmental issues discovered during the developer's due diligence. During 2025, the Trust has monitored the 40b review process and expressed support for this mixed income development.

Other Proposed Residential Developments:

AHT monitors proposed residential developments that are seeking Zoning Board of Appeals or Planning Board approvals and, from time to time, submits comments to the reviewing boards.

**Winchester Affordable Housing Trust
160 Forest Street Background Information
Town Meeting Articles 28 and 29**

The Property & Its History

160 Forest Street is Classic New England Cape built in 1938. The 2-story home (1,624 SF) has three bedrooms, one and one half baths. The lot (10,594 SF) has a lovely view as it sits up on a small hill above Forest Street, with a steep slope behind leading down to Hinds Road. In 1958, it was purchased by Howard E. Chase Jr., the Director of Veterans Services for the Town for many years. A constable in Town, Mr. Chase also performed many marriages in the home.

Mr. Chase's daughter, Marsha Chase Rice, willed the home, vacant since 2020, to the Town on her passing in November 2020. The will states "the land and the home situated" on it are "to be known as "The Chase House" in memory of Howard Chase, Jr."

The land was encumbered with a significant claim to MassHealth. The Town negotiated to settle the claim by agreeing to restrict the property for affordable housing.

Actions by the Town and the Affordable Housing Trust

In November 2024, Town Meeting voted to authorize the Select Board to accept title to, and convey an affordable housing restriction in, the property. A Town entity cannot legally hold the restriction for town-owned property. The Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) secured the non-profit Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA) to hold the restriction. A deed restriction is now recorded requiring occupancy by households below 80% of the Area Median Income ("AMI").

At the Select Board's request, the AHT developed a plan to put this vacant, deteriorating property to use as affordable housing. The AHT's efforts have included investigating the property's physical condition, contracting for a topographic and property line survey, touring the property with contractors to develop a renovation scope, convening a community forum to explain the project and get feedback, hiring a project management consultant, considering the feasibility of adding an additional unit, and analyzing the availability of financial resources.

Plan for the Property

The AHT has voted to renovate the home to create one unit of affordable homeownership for a first-time homeowner. In Winchester, there currently are over 200 rental units and only 14 homeownership units restricted to households below 80% of AMI.

Site investigations revealed the building is structurally sound, but substantial renovations are needed - replacing all major systems (roof, plumbing, heating, electrical), installing new kitchen and baths, remediating lead paint, insulating walls and ceilings, reconstructing the driveway and retaining walls, etc. After evaluating site constraints and the time, risk, and costs associated with the requisite Chapter 40B permitting process, the AHT voted to focus efforts on the provision of one housing unit, rather than adding an ADU or other units to the site.

Based upon conversations with contractors and feedback from our project consultant, the AHT has budgeted \$600,000 for the project (inclusive of construction hard costs, site work, legal, design, contingency, and other soft costs). The AHT submitted an application for \$350,000 in CPA funding and has committed up to \$250,000 (the majority of AHT's uncommitted funds), if needed, to assure that a quality renovation of the property is completed in a timely manner.

Fall 2025 Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Two articles at Town Meeting will allow the execution of 160 Forest Street to move forward.

Article 28 authorizes \$350,000 in CPA funding for 160 Forest

The development of affordable housing is one of the key pillars of the Community Preservation Act, making the 160 Forest Street renovation an ideal application of CPA funding. There are no state or federal funding sources for small, single unit, homeownership projects like this. CPA funding is the primary source used by Massachusetts localities to support and successfully develop affordable housing. The AHT is confident that the project budget provides the resources needed to complete the work. Any excess funds will be retained by the AHT to support affordable housing in Winchester.

Article 29 transfers care, custody, control, and ownership of 160 Forest to the Trust

Recognizing the purpose of the AHT and the Select Board's need to spend its time attending to other Town matters, the Select Board has proposed Article 29 to place responsibility for 160 Forest with a town entity that is focused solely on affordable housing and has the expertise to get the work done. The AHT structure was created with the intent of taking on projects like this, providing the flexibility to create public/private partnerships and the skills needed to execute projects.

With funding through Article 28 and the authority to carry out the renovation thorough Article 29, the Trust will be able to take action and move quickly to return the degrading 160 Forest Street property to use as a home and put it back on the Town's property tax rolls.

About the Trust

The AHT is a Municipal Housing Trust created by Town Meeting in 2019 with a mandate to "provide for the preservation and creation of affordable housing in the Town of Winchester for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households."

Over 140 Massachusetts towns have created Trusts - development oriented entities, taking direct action to create affordable housing. In Weston, for example, their Affordable Housing Trust has developed two projects. One seven-unit rental development is owned by the Trust on former Town-owned land, and the AHT is now working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity on a six-unit homeownership project on Town land that was transferred to the Trust. In Sudbury, their Affordable Housing Trust, using CPA funding, purchased land, issued an RFP for a development partner, and successfully created 3 affordable homeownership units.

The Winchester AHT members include one Select Board member, the Town Manager, one member appointed by Winchester Housing Partnership, and up to six members appointed by the Select Board. The Trust currently has eight members. The members of the Trust have lending, development, architectural, and legal skills. With the Town Manager and one Select Board member on the Trust, close coordination with the Town is assured.

For more AHT and 160 Forest Street information: <https://www.winchester.us/656/Affordable-Housing-Trustee-Committee>