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Date: July 10, 2026

To: Ramya Shaw, President, Board of Representatives

From: Emily Gordon, Housing Planner & Affordable Housing Manager

Re: **Updated Review of Chapter 146. Article VI. – Stamford Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

Introduction

The Stamford Affordable Housing Trust Fund (SAHTF) was enacted through the City of Stamford's Code of Ordinance on November 4, 2020 in Article VI of Chapter 146. The SAHTF held its first meeting on May 18, 2021 and has been in operation for over five years. Staff has completed an updated review of the existing ordinance and identified areas for reconsideration to improve operations and public input. Any changes to the ordinance would need to be initiated and approved by the Board of Representatives.

1. Quorum (Sec. 146-71)

Currently five of the seven members must be present to constitute a quorum.

The Board of Trustees ("the Board") has never had more than six of seven seats filled over the last five years and has been operating with five members (which is the minimum for quorum) since August 2024. As a result, all current members are needed in attendance to achieve a quorum. While not every meeting cancelation has been related to a quorum issue, several meetings needed to be canceled resulting in the SAHTF meeting for only six of the eleven scheduled meetings during 2025.

The current requirement creates a narrow window for SAHTF to operate, resulting in canceled meetings and delayed business. It also creates added pressure on existing members who currently need to be available for every meeting.

Staff recommends an update to the ordinance to reflect the following:

A. Change the quorum requirement to a simple majority of full members.

2. Composition of the Board of Trustees (Sec. 146-70)

Currently there are seven members, including five ex-officio members (or their designee) representing various boards and two members of the public. The two members of the public are to be Stamford residents who reside in affordable housing.

The Board has only ever had a maximum of six seats filled at any time and has been operating since August 2024 with only the five ex-officio members. One of the two public member seats has never been filled and both remain vacant today. The current structure restricts otherwise experienced members of the public from participating, reducing community and professional perspectives that could aid in SAHTF decision-making.

It should also be noted that, with seven full members, the SAHTF Board is relatively large. Many of Stamford's boards and commissions with significantly broader authority, such as the Zoning or Planning Boards, operate with five full members and three alternates (requiring a quorum of three members).

The ex-officio makeup makes the SAHTF Board unique when compared to other traditionally appointed boards.

A number of concerns have been raised about the existing structure of the board:

1. Appointed seats are some of the most restrictive appointed seats in the City, by definition, making them very challenging to fill.
2. Current appointed seat requirements create an increased chance of possible conflict of interest with local applicants.
3. The ex-officio makeup of the existing board puts a burden on members who have other responsibilities and priorities. Ex-officio members of other boards are required to serve two boards. Staff ex-officio members are also expected to manage multiple roles. While differing perspectives has been highlighted as a value, the primary role of these ex-officio members is to their initial elected, appointed or hired position, possibly limiting housing-specific insights that could be provided by curated appointments.
4. There are no participation opportunities for members of the public with housing finance, development, or management experience that could be valuable to the SAHTF.

Staff recommends an update to the ordinance to:

A. Restructure the SAHTF Board makeup to include five full members and three alternate members. This would allow the Board to operate similarly to other City boards and commissions.
B. Broaden the requirements of appointed members of the public to prioritize residents with lived experience in affordable housing or professional experience in housing development or management. This would expand the opportunity from only current residents of affordable housing to provide additional perspectives.
C. Reduce the number of ex-officio members to two in favor of more members of the public (six total). This will ensure there is critical representation from the Board of Representatives and the Planning Board, whose boards play direct roles associated with SAHTF activity, while providing an opportunity to appoint members of the public specifically qualified for the SAHTF Board.

3. Expenditures (Sec. 146-75)

Currently, when the SAHTF approves an expenditure of over $100,000 the Board of Representatives may reject the expenditure with a two-thirds supermajority vote within 45 days.

In over five years of operations the SAHTF has only approved two projects under this $100,000 cap with a median approval of $450,000 and average of $679,000. This means that 83% of all projects to date have required extra oversight from the Board of Representatives. None of these expenditures have been rejected or seriously contentious.

While 45 days is a short delay for large development processes, it could be significant for smaller projects or create issues for already tight deadlines. It also adds additional work for staff, and review items to the Board of Representatives agendas. If this threshold was intended to provide the Board of Representatives with oversight over significant allocations, the history of SAHTF approvals shows that expenditures over $100,000 are routine, rather than exceptional. Expenditures around $500,000 could be considered average and those at or above $1,000,000 would be considered significant.

Additionally, the existing ordinance provides some ambiguity around the application and commitment process. The language only mentions applications of $100,000 or less, requires a quarterly review, and limits the amount the Board may disburse at any one time.

Staff recommends updates to the ordinance to:

A. Change the expenditure level that requires submission to the Board of Representatives from over $100,000 to $1,000,000 or more. This would ensure that referrals to the Board of Representatives are only for exceptionally large requests, which have historically made up 17% of commitments.
B. Update application language to refer to applications of any amount, clarifying that the SAHTF may accept all applications on a continuous basis.
C. Clarify that the Board may disburse or commit funds as needed so funding may be utilized for projects in a timely manner, without delay.

Summary

While the SAHTF has been in operation for over five years, with multi-year housing development processes the SAHTF learning process has been equally as long. There are some clear opportunities for improvements, and the following adjustments to Article IV of Chapter 146 in the Code of Ordinances are expected to improve operations of the SAHTF in the short and long term:

1. Lower quorum to a simple majority of Board members to reduce pressure on members and improve operation flow.
2. Adjust Board composition to better reflect existing boards and commissions and reduce strict requirements for public members to ensure improved function, limit overburdened members and broaden appointments to attract specifically qualified members.
3. Increase expenditure level that would trigger recommendation to the Board of Representatives to prevent delays and reduce duplicative oversight for standard requests.
4. Update application and commitment language to clarify that all applications may be reviewed on a continuous basis and funds may be disbursed or committed as needed.