

**Washington Housing Commission**  
**Minutes**  
**Tuesday, October 17, 2023- 5:30 pm**  
**In Person at Town Hall and on Zoom**

**Members present:** Judie Gorra, Carrie Loyd, Robert Woodroffe, Henrietta Small

**Staff:** Michelle Gorra, Jim Brinton, Jay Hubelbank

**Public:** Chris Charles, Kristen (from Habitat for Humanity), Ann Jamieson (from *Voices*)

**1. The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Judie Gorra, Commission Chair**

**2. Review of Minutes of September 12, 2023**

- a. Robert moves for adoption, Henrietta seconds. All approved.**

**3. Business**

- a. Habitat for Humanity workshop to follow the Housing Commission meeting**
- b. Judie and Robert attended the Selectmen's meeting on September 28, 2023 to propose transferring Conveyance Fees to the Housing Commission**
  - i. Jim Brinton shares that he and Dean met with the Board of Finance**
    - 1. The Board of Finance is reluctant to commit to every year as the amount changes every year and comes out of the voters' purview.
    - 2. The committee agrees that funding needs to be more consistent, likely in the ballpark of \$100,000
    - 3. Jim asks if the goal of the Commission is to build units and aide the Trust.
      - a. Judie clarifies yes, as well as the Down Payment Assistance program.
    - 4. Michelle shares the ordinance for the fund
      - a. The ordinance states that the money can be used for the acquisition of land, but not homes.
    - 5. Jim suggests looking at the ordinance with an attorney to maximize and set up the fund for future purchases. The language needs to be crystal clear.
    - 6. Jim shares that certain line items in the town's budget do not need the amount of money needed in previous years, which opens up the option to move money and allocate to housing.
    - 7. Jim asks if we can offer the same tax benefit for donations of land to the Trust or the town, much like Steep Rock can.
    - 8. Before this money is reallocated, the ordinance needs to be clarified so the money can be used.
    - 9. Jay adds that regulations need to be adjusted to allow multi-family housing as well as expanding the definition of what the money can be used for.
    - 10. Judie asks if this is possible for the next budget session.
      - a. Jim is comfortable with starting the process immediately. He clarifies that the money does not need to be tied to the budget cycle. It starts with bringing this topic to the Town Meeting to change the ordinance.
    - 11. Michelle clarifies that the conveyance fee is not the best option and that budgeting to allocate money is. Jim agrees.

12. The amount of money needed is not going to be possible for a long time, even with an increased amount of \$100,000 per year.
  13. Judie clarifies that the conveyance is typically over \$200,000 per year in the last five years.
  14. Jay adds that donations of land would help the overall cost. Michelle clarifies that the \$5.4M factors in donated land.
  15. Chris adds that there is a conversation about how to lessen the gap: smaller footprint, more energy efficient properties. Requires additional thought and creativity to find the solution, but Chris encourages that this is possible, including 8-30G.
  16. Jim follows up that there is a commitment from the town to funding this, but additional talks are needed.
  17. Michelle asks what the bandwidth for these projects are given the work that falls to the Trust.
  18. Judie asks if the house proposed on Baldwin Hill is going to cost \$500,000 or more. Chris is unsure and says that historically \$375,000 is needed. Michelle adds that that doesn't include land or pre-construction costs. Chris states that the Haystack Woods project homes each cost more than half a million dollars. The Vincent property made up the gap with state funds.
    - a. Judie counters that we aren't getting the state and federal grants that we apply for. Michelle adds that they are going for bigger projects.
  19. Jim states that the Trust should be brought into the conversation soon.
  20. Jay adds that Maria Horne could be a helpful addition to a future meeting as most of the communities fall into her district. Maria will also be at the upcoming summit at Warren Town Hall.
- ii. Judie highlights that the Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission has an exhibit at the Academy Building in Salisbury highlighting their work and publicizing the need.

**4. Motion to adjourn made by Henrietta, seconded Robert. Adjourned at 5:57pm.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Carrie Loyd**

**Meeting recording:**

<https://youtu.be/2Fbjfx5UGGM>