

Minutes Washington Housing Commission Meeting Zoom  
February 8, 2022

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:30 P.M.

Present: members - Judie Gorra, Shane Mongar, Lindsay Larson, Robert Woodroffe,  
Also present - Michelle Gorra, meeting facilitator, Chris Charles, Joan Lodsins, Janet Hill,  
Dean Sarjeant, Jay Hubelbank, Henrietta Small, Ted Bent, Bill Fairbairn, Diana Arfine,  
John Gonski, Mary Ann Haverstock, Leslie Anderson, Linda Zukauskas

2. The Minutes of Jan 11, 2022 were accepted with one correction to line 13 in the second paragraph - Washington Down Payment Assistance Fund.

3. Old Business

a. Presentation by Bill Fairbairn re Washington Housing Trust. Bill updated the Commission re its work. The Vincent Farm Project was completed through CT. Statute 8-30g which allows the developer to override the zoning regs., as long as 30% of the units are affordable and half of that need to be for people of 60% of area median income and half for people of 80% of medium income. A grant for 480 K was gotten from the State and 70K from the Town and private donations. Four years ago, the Trust received a property on Baldwin Hill. The plan is to do a feasibility study to see if it can be split into two lots. Bill update the Commission on the cost of doing a feasibility study. Financing of the project will be the next issue. Bill is also talking to another person who may be willing to donate land for housing.

A discussion ensued re the Washington Housing Trust website. A page on the Washington Housing Commission website re the Washington Housing Trust will be included in the future. Michelle Gorra reported that the Commission would like to promote the donation of land and money to the Trust through a mailing. The price of land in Washington is a major stumbling block to contractors being able to build affordable housing. Bill said zoning changes will be key to providing affordable housing. Michelle asked about waitlist. There is a waitlist at the present time. There is a need for multi-family affordable housing. Bill is going to check on the CDBG grant and see if it will be available for affordable housing for next year using the same application. Michelle reported that Judie, Lindsay and she had attended the Regional Council Housing meeting and reported on CHODO grants. Litchfield Housing Authority has applied. According to Bill, State financing will take at least 5 years. Washington's mill rate is one of the lowest 3 in the State. Bill suggested that in the future the town of Washington, which has good financial resources, will need to decide if it will finance affordable housing through some bonds. Bill Fairbairn donated the land for the Senior Housing, Virginia Risley donated the land for the Church St. project, and wealthy people have donated for many things in town like the Gunn Library. People are being spoken to re donating land to the Trust rather than just to Steep Rock. Jay reminded the Commission that the Town does not have a history of bonding. Bill will keep the Commission up to date with what the Trust is doing.

b. Presentation by Diana Arfine and John Gonski re Habitat for Humanity work. Diana is the new executive director and John the new president of the Board. Myfield land to build 7 single family homes was donated to Habitat, which built one home last summer and is now occupied. Habitat is in the process of deciding how many they will be able to build. Diana reported that there has been a struggle finding appropriate buyers as some applicants do not meet the requirements set forth by Habitat for a mortgage. In addition, the homes are two-bedroom homes which are not appropriate for larger families. The mortgage is subsidized by and the down payment paid for by Habitat. Michelle said that the Commission could help find applicants if possible. John Gonski reported that the increase in building materials caused by the Covid

situation put building on hold. Those costs are now slowly decreasing. Habitat has also hired a construction manager who can help keep the costs lower. Habitat is looking for families with incomes in the 45K to 70K range. Habitat is working on designs which would be appropriate for the property, hoping to initiate 3 homes this year. Michelle offered for the Commission to publicize information regarding income guidelines. Town residents can assist with donations to the Habitat Restore, donations of money, or by working on the home with painting or having professional contractors making donations of time.

c. Judie reported that she and Michelle met with the Board of Selectmen to request a change in the Affordable Housing Fund ordinance threshold from \$5000 to \$10,000. The Board of Selectmen will vote at the next Selectman's meeting as to whether or not send the request for a change in the ordinance on the spending threshold on the agenda of the next town meeting in March.

d. The budget that has been submitted to the Board of Selectman includes \$3000 for printing and mailing for publicizing the needs of the Washington Community Housing Trust and the Down Payment Assistance program. On the recommendation of the Selectmen, a stipend for secretary for the Commission has been requested for approximately \$900 which is what has been typical for commissions that meet monthly. A discussion took place with the Selectmen re adding \$100,000.00 to the Affordable Housing Fund. Finally, a minimum amount was requested for miscellaneous items.

e. Lindsay led a discussion re updating the town website for the Commission. Several changes were recommended by Lindsay, Michelle and other members. The members agreed to the changes.

#### 4. New Business

a. Lindsay presented a flyer advertising the Down Payment Assistance program. The members and former commission member Leslie Anderson commented and made suggestions. Lindsay will send out an updated version. Michelle felt she could make a few copies at town hall for realtors and at the next meeting the Commission will vote on an expenditure for a more extensive printing.

5. Visitors were invited to bring forth any concerns. None were brought forth.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 7:00.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judie Gorra  
Chairman, Housing Commission

<https://youtu.be/E2yybn3H60k>  
link to meeting recording