

April 11, 2011

Present: Liddy Adams, Andy O'Hazo, Wayne Hileman, Jean Suddaby, Sue Werkhoven

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Housing Commission was called to order at 5:06 pm by Chairman Wayne Hileman.

Minutes of March 14, 2011 Regular Meeting

Wayne Hileman moved to accept the minutes as submitted. Andy O'Hazo seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Items Not on Agenda

A report on a field trip was moved by unanimous consent to New Business.

Updates/Communications

A. Referral to Zoning Commission re: Housing in the Business District

The Zoning Commission has scheduled a public hearing for March 25th on the Housing Commission's request that the Business District's housing be freed from the minimum square footage requirement. The Planning Commission has already approved this request.

B. Planning Commission Sub-Committee – 2013 POCD

Wayne Hileman attended the second meeting of this committee which has a representative from each commission on it. Participants felt that certain parts of the current Plan of Conservation and Development have been working well, especially in the areas of conservation and open space. Since the Board of Education is a creation of the state, there is hesitation in addressing the area of education, but consideration of its future will be taken up in some way. The chapter on Housing warrants more than a general tweaking and will hopefully be rewritten. Also, a new section on economic development may be added.

C. Affordable Housing Designation for Town Beach House

Wayne Hileman received a letter from the Selectmen's office responding to the Housing Commission's request for the Town to examine whether the Beach House can be qualified as 'affordable', thus adding 1.5 points to the Town's Affordable Housing Appeals List. According to Mary Anne Greene the Beach House will not qualify at this time because the current tenants' household income doesn't meet the requirements.

Old Business

A. Overlay Zones for Village Centers

Wayne Hileman passed out information on overlay zones to the Planning Commission Sub-Committee. The members were interested in this concept since various constituencies' housing needs could be addressed this way. Wayne also shared the latest census data which shows the Town having gained houses but having lost people, partly due to a marked increase in second homes.

New Business

A. Field Trip

Sue Werkhoven and Jean Suddaby took a field trip to an open house in the Northfield section of Litchfield where its Housing Trust had remodeled an old fire house into two affordable rental units. The Litchfield Housing Trust received a block grant as part of the project. Each unit is 1250 sq.ft. with 3 bedrooms and two bathrooms. One unit was handicapped accessible. The project was energy efficient, utilizing geo thermal heating and energy star appliances. Sue and Jean felt that the renovation was very nicely done. Almost 100 people attended the open house.

B. CHFA Mortgages and Affordable Housing Fund

Wayne Hileman contacted Rose Holbrook of CHFA regarding using some of the Housing Commission's Affordable Housing Fund to help qualified, first-time home buyers with down payment assistance. CHFA is amenable to such an arrangement, and offered various ways to achieve a partnership. The Commission discussed the different forms of assistance, including closing costs, moving expenses and renovation through 203(k). They also discussed the potential terms of assistance, from grants to interest-free loans. Members discussed the impracticality of getting involved with renovating any houses currently under the purchase price ceiling, and agreed to pursue straightforward down payment assistance. Wayne will contact Ms. Holbrook to this effect and seek further information.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:12pm.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Monday, May 9, 2011, in the Land Use Room at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Patte Doran
Secretary