

April 14, 2008

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

Guests: None

Visitors: Heather Leonard

Call to Order

Chairman Wayne Hileman called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Minutes of February 11, 2008

Wayne Hileman made the following correction to the minutes: Under **Budget**, after "budget request" added "and operating budget request".

Sue Werkhoven moved to accept the minutes as corrected. Wayne Hileman seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Updates/Reports

A. Liddy Adams reported on the two successive Saturday meetings of the Future Uses of the Washington Primary School Committee. This group was to have suggestions ready in case the WPS no longer would be used in its present capacity.

The brainstorming sessions produced a wide array of ideas. Everyone agreed on keeping the gym to use for appropriate activities. Other suggestions were leasing a portion of the building as studio space for artists, offering adult education classes, relocating the senior center, and/or providing elderly housing in the form of condos or rentals. Administration of housing units could be through a private interest or the Washington Housing Trust. Other ideas were added at the second meeting such as relocating Park and Recreation. Liddy Adams asked people she met informally for their opinions. She heard from several that the town should consider the building as an asset and sell it. Bantam sold its school building to the State of CT while Ridgefield sold a school building to a private company currently using it for office space. The committee agreed that this idea was definitely something to consider. The flood plain aspect of this site didn't seem to be a major issue. Whatever the school's possible uses, a resident who lives near it was concerned that the school not 'go dark' but be an active place.

All these suggestions were put into a report and given to the Selectmen. The Committee then disbanded.

B. Meeting with Don Brigham

Wayne Hileman met with Don Brigham when Don was recently in Washington. Don had come across an affordable housing complex in Sanibel, Florida. He brought some brochures on this "Below Market Rate Housing on Sanibel" for the Housing Commission to look at. The way this complex is administered reminded Don of the Washington Housing Trust's approach.

C. Letter to Zoning re: Accessory Apartments

Wayne Hileman has submitted a letter to David Owen, Chair of the Washington Zoning Commission, recommending that the Zoning Commission leave the present regulations unchanged. The current regulations help provide a source of modestly sized and priced dwellings thus promoting housing diversity.

Long Range Plan

A. The group designated as 'Tweeners', a word coined by Wayne to designate those people who have too much money to qualify for affordable housing but not enough to buy a house in town, was discussed. There is a discrepancy in determining the Area Median Income (which is fixed annually by HUD & assigned to us--currently under \$80K) versus determining the Area Median Home Price (which is market driven and 'floats'- 2005-\$491K, 2006-\$410K, 2007-\$600K). To qualify for Affordable

Housing a family's income cannot exceed \$64K. A median home price of \$490K, with 20% down, would require an annual income of around \$130K. In developing the Housing Commission's long range plan, the housing needs of various groups should include these 'tweeners'.

B. Discussion of Public Act 07-4- Incentive Housing Zones

The Connecticut Housing Program for Economic Growth, researched and promoted by the HOMEConnecticut campaign to make housing more affordable for low and moderate income workers, families and elderly residents across the state, was approved by the 2007 General Assembly during its June special session. The bill provides incentives to municipalities that voluntarily create Incentive Housing Zones at sizes and locations of their choosing. The legislation gives municipalities' complete control over the location, amount and design of the new housing. A full description can be found at www.HOMEConnecticut.org.

Wayne Hileman recommended that the Housing Commission explore this legislation to see what might be in Washington's housing interests.

Adjournment

Wayne Hileman moved to adjourn the meeting. Liddy Adams seconded the motion which was carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting is Monday, May 12, at 5:00 p.m. in the Land Use Room, Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Patte Doran
