

February 21, 2005

Housing Diversity Committee

Present: Jeff Andersen, Don Brigham, Chris Charles, Patte Doran, Bill Fairbairn, Marty Meyers, Simone Savage, Selectman Sears, Dave Werkhoven

Approval of Minutes: The January 10 minutes were approved unanimously.

Chairman Bill Fairbairn called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. He reviewed the original charge to the committee from Selectman Sears. This included developing strategies for fulfilling the key recommendations of the 2002 Housing Study Report. One of these was to produce 96 new units of affordable housing over ten years. Another was to develop possible funding ideas. Bill felt that setting up a parcel program and creating a Town Housing Commission were two high priority goals.

Don Brigham agreed with the goal of 96 units over ten years and with the parcel program. The latter seemed both practical and popular with many in the community because it enabled people to own something. He felt the Housing Commission idea was not as attractive as was an expanded role for the Housing Trust, but he would go with the group consensus on this matter. As to funding, the town should provide some amount through the tax structure. Currently, there is a \$25000 line item and this should be increased to \$50000. Bill Fairbairn interjected that he preferred segregated funds for affordable housing initiatives. David Werkhoven agreed that some figure should be earmarked in the town budget for affordable housing.

Selectman Sears researched the faculty apartment concept and found the private schools receptive to the idea. However, such matters would have to go through the schools' trustees. Chris Charles pointed out that this didn't address the home ownership concept. However, Jeff Anderson felt that the faculty apartment idea could be used as a stop gap for the town to buy time in meeting the dictates of the State Housing Appeals Act. Moreover, once River Woods, Ellsworth, and the New Preston units were all certified, these would probably give the Town 62 points, with an additional 13 points needed. Chris Charles reasoned that ten single family units would put the town "over the hump" in meeting the moratorium.

Marty Meyers hoped that whatever system is set up, it addresses how to keep the town's young people and older people who want to stay here. As to funding, perhaps to really move on limited equity housing, a two million dollar bond might be in order. Chris Charles added that once we reach 75 points, there would be time to produce well thought out projects. Simone Savage felt that filling quotas, while not a key goal, was necessary in order to get to the moratorium. She also favored the idea of ear marking substantial additional funds that went beyond the \$50000 a year line item. Chris Charles said this additional money would be used to secure a parcel of land and then the town would get its money back.

Simone Savage updated her research on accessory apartments. She suggested inviting Patrick Hare of Hare Planning to address the committee. He is an expert on accessory units. (Handouts describing Hare Planning on file in the Selectman's Office)

Jeff Andersen gave out a revised handout of his scenario for keeping the 2 percent affordable housing moratorium in place while the town housing stock continues to grow. (Handout on file in Selectman's Office)

Chris Charles felt that having money ear marked for affordable housing would show developers that the

town is proactive on this matter. He envisions a Housing Commission and the Housing Trust having some overlap. A Housing Commission would add on to the Housing Trust's existing projects.

Selectman Sears said that an empowered Housing Commission, elected or appointed, and created by written ordinance, would provide a leadership structure for producing results. Each Town Commission speaks for and to the community regarding its area of oversight. Chris Charles requested that all the research done by this committee be collected and given over to the Housing Commission, once it was formed. The committee will recommend, as part of its March report, the formation of a Town Housing Commission. In order to help in the drafting of the ordinance, the committee would do some research on similar ordinances from other towns.

At the next meeting, the committee will go over a draft of the March report.

Bill Fairbairn, and any other committee members who can, should attend the March 21st meeting of the Board of Finance, which starts at 5 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE MONDAY, MARCH 7, 7 P.M. TOWN HALL.

Respectfully submitted,

Patte Doran