

Washington Housing Commission
Minutes
Hybrid Meeting July 12, 2022

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:35. Unable to record through zoom, the meeting was auditorily recorded. Present: Members - Shane Mongar Henrietta Small, Robert Woodroffe, Judie Gorra, Facilitator - Michelle Gorra, Guests Chris Charles, on zoom Leslie Anderson, Joan Lodsins, Linda Zukauskas and Sally.
2. The Minutes from the July 12, 2022 were reviewed. Robert Woodroffe's name (Woody) was added as being in attendance at the Zoning Commission's meeting on June 23. It was clarified that our Commission budget was approved at the town meeting and the line item for a clerk was included. The Commission will continue to look for a clerk to manage the technology, take minutes and post minutes and agendas on the Town website. Woody asked if there were funds to actually hire a lawyer for the commission's purposes and was told there are. Michelle offered the information that Jocelyn Ayer of the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity is looking for a lawyer to present on the advantage of donating land to a housing trust which would be available to all the housing trusts in the Litchfield area.

3. Old Business and Chairperson's report:

a. The Zoning Commission will be holding a hearing on Monday, July 25 to discuss opting out of the Accessory Apartment part of PA 21-29. When the Housing Plan was developed the committee felt the current regulations in Washington are generous to accessory apartments and the town attorney, Mike Ziska, recommended that the town opt out of that provision in the State statute. A discussion ensued regarding the accessory apartments. It was offered that the issue is getting people to rent to people other than family members. Chris Charles would like the Commission to recommend allowing 2 attached accessory apartments on a property, one of which could be affordable and another at market rate. The commission was reminded that in order for these to count as affordable by State definition there would have to be a deed restriction. The Commission members are encouraged to look at the zoning regulations and come up with some ideas to present to the Zoning Commission. Accessory dwellings, attached or detached, would be helpful to seniors wanting to downsize.

Henrietta as a new member questioned the number of affordable housing units needed to comply with State guidelines. The Town of Washington is currently at the 2% level while the State is recommending 10%, which would mean an additional 188 units. The goal in the Housing Plan is for 30 additional units within 5 years. Woody gave an example of a town in Massachusetts which did a survey of residents as to whether they would exchange keeping their home affordable in exchange for tax forgiveness. No one was in favor.

The Commission members are encouraged to attend the July 25 Zoning Commission meeting. Judie will compose a statement regarding accessory apartments and also supporting having the Zoning Commission look at other parts of PA 21-29 especially those relating to multiple family housing - Section 4, #4 and #5 and the goals in the Housing Plan as it relates to the Zoning Commission, especially the overlay plan for Marbledale. The statement will request that the Zoning Commission specifically allow multi-family housing. The statement will be sent to Commission members for comment.

Chris Charles brought to the Commission's attention that when the Macricosta land was purchased supposedly 40 acres was going to be reserved for affordable housing. Michelle will find the minutes for that meeting and Bill Fairbairn will also be contacted.

b. Judie reported that Kate Johnson from Norfolk Living has agreed to present on September 13 at 5:30 a program on the Haystack Woods project, including information about the Planning and Zoning process, the importance of energy efficiency and sustainable design in affordable housing, the importance of affordable housing in general, and the various technologies being implemented in the process. The Commission would also like her to address how they got the land, the savings generated over the course of a 30 year mortgage, and how could she imagine developing a project with both affordable and non-affordable housing at a lower cost. The presentation will be open to the public and members of the Zoning Commission, the Planning Commission, the Sustainability Committee, the Economic Development Committee and the Board of Selectmen will be specifically invited.

c. The Washington Housing Trust has been unable to get a proposal for a feasibility study on the Baldwin Hill property.

4. New Business:

a. As discussed above, the Commission will attend the Zoning Commission Meeting on July 25 and also send a letter to the Zoning Commission prior to the meeting.

b. The next Washington newsletter will be sent out prior to the September meeting, therefore the Commission agreed to compose an article about the presentation by Kate Johnson with a deadline date of August 15.

c. Michelle reiterated that The Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity will be hiring someone to assist housing commissions and housing trusts.

d. Judie reported that one person asked about the Down Payment Assistance Program but was not eligible because she was purchasing a home in another town.

5. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Judie Gorra
Chairperson Washington Housing Commission