

## **Washington Housing Commission**

### **Minutes**

Tuesday, July 11, 2023, 5:30pm

**Member present:** Judie Gorra, Carrie Loyd, Shane Mongar, Robert Woodrooffe, Henrietta Small, Charles Jackson

**Staff:** Michelle Gorra

**Public:** Chris Charles, Ann Jamieson (from Voices)

**1. The meeting was called to order at 5:32 by Judie Gorra, Commission Chair; Charles was made a full member in Darryl's absence**

**2. Review of Minutes of June 13, 2023**

a. Robert moved to adopt the June meeting minutes, Shane seconded, all approved

**3. Old Business**

**a. Report on Zoning subcommittee re: multifamily housing PA 21-29**

- i. Robert reported that subcommittee Chair Nick Solley and Vice Chair Janet Hill have a rendering of the multi-family housing regulations; subcommittee will respond and approve; regulations will then be sent to the lawyer
- ii. Following the lawyer's review, the regulations will be sent to Zoning and Planning to be voted consistent with POCD
- iii. Michelle confirmed that the Selectmen do not need to approve or go to a Town meeting.

**b. Report on marketing partnership between the Housing Commission and the Washington Community Housing Trust**

- i. Trying to market the need for affordable housing and garner local support, including financial and land donations
- ii. Judie created a write-up for the Selectman's Newsletter highlighting the combined work of the Commission and Trust
- iii. Michelle has been working with Oscar, the town's summer intern, and Ted Bent to create a pamphlet for the WCHT
  1. Printing is budgeted for and as soon as the content is finalized, the committee agrees to move forward with distribution
  2. Will be disseminated at Senior Center and organically through Committee events including Community Day, if rescheduled
  3. Charles asked if the piece could be mailed and made affordable via bulk rate
    - a. Michelle estimated it would cost \$520 to mail plus printing (est. 2900 pieces), but suggests waiting for online giving options to be up and running
      1. Michelle inquired with Ted, Bill, and Anne Marie about PayPal and is following up
- iv. Robert contacted the six houses of worship in town to inquire about making an announcement (a draft was sent to the committee via email on June 14, 2023)

1. Will visit First Congregational Church on the Green on August 6th, Salem Covenant on August 20th, and St. Andrew's in Marbledale on September 17th
2. Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. John's, and New Preston Congregational Church did not reply
  - a. Robert asked for the help of the commission to initiate contact
  - b. Pastors Robyn and Linda could be useful as well
3. Michelle proposed pamphlet, if ready in time, is handed out and suggests Commission members plan to attend in support
  - a. One-page summary of Housing Plan could also be useful in this case, as well as access to full set of materials on the website; perhaps a QR Code could be efficient in directing those interested
4. Henrietta proposed asking Churches to include information and links on their websites as well

**c. Baldwin Hill Project report**

- i. Judie reported, as previously shared with Committee in an email on June 29, 2023, that only one house can be included on the property
  1. Michelle reported Bill has shared that there could be another house, but it is cost prohibitive; one house for now
  2. Chris suggested that areas should be well-defined so the first build does not prohibit additional options in the future
  3. Judie countered that she was at a meeting where it was clear that only one house could be built due to a small stream and steep incline/decline; Brad Sedito will be looking further but requires a larger rendering
  4. Robert asked if the challenge is primarily septic and could adjoining properties be approached to join utilities
    - a. This was the case on River Road
- ii. Charles asked if the maximum square footage has been determined
  1. The answer is not available, but Chris noted that the minimum size is two bedrooms for septic

**4. New Business**

**a. Report on Habitat for Humanity workshop held June 13, 2023**

- i. At least one interested couple attended and there may have been others on Zoom
- ii. Workshop was recorded and made public, unclear if leads were generated

**b. Article in Selectman's notices**

- i. Judie shared the article she wrote

**c. Washington Community Day suggestions**

- i. Unclear if the day has been rescheduled
- ii. Judie and Henrietta spread the word outside of the Market in place of rained-out Community Day
  1. Worked well, worth doing again, cookies were a hit

## **5. Visitors/Additional Business**

- a. Judie commented that there have been suggestions that we need to budget to support affordable housing instead of keeping the mill rate down.
  - i. Michelle reminded that spreading the word helps the topic at the forefront, the more we can do this, the better.
    - 1. Increasing the budget requires advocacy, and all this committee is doing can and does work toward that
      - a. Including letters to the editor, letters to Selectmen, Commission attending Selectmen's meetings or Finance Committee meetings to make sure this is on the radar as they create the budget
      - b. Should be a priority for Commission and community
  - ii. Selectmen put together the budget in January, advocacy must be done on their timeline
- b. Henrietta asked about pending grants and other available funding for affordable housing
  - i. Pending grants- federal application (through Sen. Chris Murphy's office) and HTCC. One is for the repairs needed at Dodge Farm and the other is for Baldwin Hill.
    - ii. Jocelyn would know the answer to Henrietta's question
    - iii. Through Sustainable CT, Falls Village received a small matching grant; most are likely this size
    - iv. Housing Trust would proceed with this in partnership with the Commission, but who takes the lead would depend on which entity would be awarded the grant
- c. Discussion of the conveyance fee, which now goes to general fund. Allocation is at the discretion of the Selectman. Is this a feasible idea to assist with making major acquisitions?
  - i. This was made a goal in the Housing Plan, needs to be a discussion with the Selectmen
  - ii. New allocation was made at the start of the new fiscal year, and Commission needs numbers before pursuing the option, including clarification on whether this would be in addition to the existing allocation
    - 1. Judie will pursue this and report back with more information including how much money comes in now

## **6. Motion to Adjourn at 6:22 by Charles, seconded by Shane**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Carrie Loyd- Secretary

Link to meeting recording  
[https://youtu.be/vL\\_NX9W1DT4](https://youtu.be/vL_NX9W1DT4)