

**Washington Housing Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 6:30 pm
Town Hall and on Zoom**

Members present: Judie Gorra, Carrie Loyd, Darryl Wright, Henrietta Small

Staff: Michelle Gorra

Public: Ann Jamieson (from *Voices*), Lindsay Larson (from LCCHO, presenting)

1. Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm

2. Review of Minutes February 13, 2024

- a. Darryl moves to accept the minutes, Henrietta seconds, all in favor**

3. Old Business

a. Update on Baldwin Hill Property

- i. Judie gave invoices to Linda Gomez; will first go to Selectmen, then the Board of Finance. Checks will be cut this week in the amounts of \$2800 and \$700 for engineering for the Baldwin Hill property.

b. Update on additional property being donated to the Washington Community Housing Trust

- i. Closing will be in April, Bill has engineers lined up for a feasibility study. Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity wrote up a proposal summary of engineering work that could be needed. Lindsay has already sent this to Bill.
- ii. Bill has said that they are looking into multifamily housing options for this property.

c. Update on request for change in Housing Commission ordinance to include the purchase of land and structures for affordable housing projects.

- i. Selectmen have not yet reviewed, but it is coming up at their meeting this week.

4. New Business

a. Discussion of the Playbook and Toolkit material developed by the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity. Lindsay Larson is present to help us in this endeavor.

- i. LCCHO is a non-profit coordinating a regional response to housing affordability challenges in Litchfield County.
- ii. Currently partnered with 18 different developments underway
- iii. Review of Playbook and Toolkit
1. Playbook: Goal is public will-building to support projects and activate interested parties
 - a. Strategies included in document: Build optimism, navigate disruptive comments, make people and systems the main characters, develop authentic engagement strategy
 - b. Information comes from surveys, representatives, and general feedback
 2. Toolkit: Examples of concrete ideas for communications and engagement
 - a. Strategies included in the document: Newsletters, social media, public speaking, event engagement
 - b. Document is made to engage people who are already in favor, but need to be activated; not to win over detractors
 - c. The Town of Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission's e-newsletter is a great example

- i. Salisbury uses an opt-in model for subscribers; anyone can sign up
- iv. Litchfield County Housing Needs Assessment
 1. Coming soon, hopefully within the next month; website with data by town
 2. This is designed to be a helpful resource for commissions to use in communications
- v. Discussion of the validity of American Community Survey data
 1. Michelle raises inaccuracies with this data, Lindsay agrees it is not the best for small-town data reporting, but clarifies that other sources were also used.
 2. Regional Plan Association assisted with the project and ensured data was thoroughly examined
 3. Henrietta raises the source Data Haven, Lindsay will explore and cross-check with the existing data
- vi. Salisbury newsletter model might be ambitious for this group, but could be a goal
 1. Once-a-month Selectmen's email includes commission updates and could be a place to start
 2. Lindsay suggests a twice-annual or quarterly communication as a place to start
 3. An interesting first topic could be the difference between the Trust and the Commission
- vii. Michelle asks Lindsay if there is something we should be focusing on
 1. Lindsay suggests collaboration between the Trust and Commission; presence at events, continuing written updates in newsletters

b. Any other concerns of members.

- i. Michelle shares that the town was awarded the Congressionally Directed Spending Grant of \$950k; we applied to fund repairs at Dodge Farm.
 1. This is a lot for the Trust to manage on top of their other projects
- ii. Board of Selectmen will present their budget to the Board of Finance (April 1) then they vote and then take it to a town meeting (May 16)
 1. This budget includes a substantial request from this commission
 - a. Members of this commission should plan to be in attendance
- iii. Habitat for Humanity home dedication is tentatively June 29 in Town Hall
 1. This will be a celebration and an educational opportunity
 2. Michelle suggests a welcome basket for these two new families moving to town
 - a. Michelle will talk to WBA about items
 3. Possibility that houses #3 and #4 may also be ready
 - a. Darryl shares that two Shepaug teachers may be purchasing house #3
 4. If CHAFA guidelines are followed we can count them as affordable (until resold)
- iv. Michelle proposes the idea of purchasing a branded tablecloth if the budget allows, Commission agrees

c. Meeting adjourned at 7:27

Respectfully Submitted,
Carrie Loyd, Secretary

Link to meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0z1q3lhOJo>