

## **July 14, 2008**

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

**Guests:** Jack Boyer, Marty Meyers, John Millington, Martha Gavenas, Chris Charles

**Visitors:** None

### **Call To Order**

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

### **Minutes of June 9, 2008**

The following corrections were made under Inclusion of Items Not on Agenda: “---which Phil Markert attended. Liddy Adams thought---. Patte Doran gave the contact information to---.” Liddy Adams moved to accept the minutes as corrected. Sue Werkhoven seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

### **Updates**

0. Affordable Housing Appeals List. The Congregational Church on the Green has decided not to renew the deed restrictions on those Ellsworth Apartments that had been dedicated as affordable. However, the Church has affirmed that the rents for these apartments will not be raised until the present tenants leave, after which market rates would apply. The elimination of these deed restrictions will result in a loss of 6 points on the Town's Affordable Housing Appeals List, moving the total from 51.5 to 45.5.
- A. Partnership with Open Space Committee. Wayne Hileman informed members that the joint project which Open Space and the Housing Commissions had been considering will not be pursued further. There appears to be resistance within the Conservation Commission to partnering with Housing on any land acquisition initiative.

### **Forum with the Washington Community Housing Trust.**

Wayne Hileman welcomed members of the Trust to the meeting and asked them what criteria they would like to see the Housing Commission use when considering available properties. Chris Charles felt it might be easier to pursue a small parcel of perhaps 2 or 3 acres if the soil type was appropriate. Trying to utilize larger parcels seemed likely to incur a lengthy process that could go on for years. For example, a small parcel with a house already on it might be used for 2 limited equity family homes with the original house sold at market rate. Chris also recalled that when the Open Space Steering Committee had first tackled conservation issues the emphasis had been on acquiring open space, but the Open Space Committee always recognized that housing issues were an integral part of the overall plan of development. Marty Meyers asked whether Steep Rock or other land trusts might donate a small piece of their land that was perhaps isolated from their main acquisitions. John Millington said in his experience land trusts were wary of doing this. Jack Boyer proposed sending out a bulk mailing jointly from the Housing Trust and the Housing Commission to Washington property owners to see if they might have a small land parcel they would be willing to sell. Also, the public misperception that the Housing Trust and the Housing Commission were overlapping organizations needed to be clarified. The Housing Commission operates as a research group and facilitator of housing choices for the town whereas the Housing Trust builds and/or administers affordable housing. Wayne Hileman said he would draft a letter for the bulk mailing and send the draft to the Housing Trust and Housing Commission members for input.

### **Housing Incentive Zones**

Wayne Hileman described for Housing Trust members the State's Incentive Housing Zones (Public Act 07-4), which can provide technical and financial support for a higher density of development in or near transportation hubs and village centers. Wayne felt that protecting rural character included maintaining the vitality of village centers. The threat of sprawl in Washington was not with small houses on small lots but with large houses on larger lots. By having some clustering of houses, more land could be left untouched. But village centers couldn't remain viable unless their basic businesses, such as a hardware

and grocery store, a drug store, a bank, and so on, were retained. Chris Charles added that a viable community included people available for activities such as the Fire Department, the PTO, Little League coaches, and so on. Chris Charles asked if the Housing Commission, in their role as a research group, might come up with a set of criteria for determining workable parcels for affordable housing that would be in the best interests of the community. Such criteria could help private entities understand what was acceptable before they thrashed around wasting their time. Wayne Hileman complimented the Housing Trust for its hard work over the years to provide affordable housing. The Housing Commission, in addition to supporting such efforts, also had a role in helping to facilitate a range of housing choices that included moderate and market rate housing. The Housing Trust members said they could only give support for the affordable part of housing choices, due to their not-for-profit status. Their role would then be to administer houses a developer designated as affordable. Wayne Hileman said the application for an Incentive Zone Grant necessitated identifying an area in or near a village center, since Washington has no public transportation hub. The old town garage site was discussed in that regard. A preliminary site inspection, especially soil testing, might be considered, using some of the Housing Commission's discretionary funding. Based on the results, the Housing Commission and the Housing Trust could further explore applying for an Incentive Zone Grant.

### **Adjourned**

Sue Werkhoven moved to adjourn the meeting. Wayne Hileman seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:35.

The next scheduled meeting is Monday, August 11, at 5:00 p.m. in the Land Use Room, Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patte Doran