

## January 9, 2006

Present: Liddy Adams, Don Brigham, Wayne Hileman, Jean Suddaby, Sue Werkhoven, Dick Sears

Selectman Sears called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Selectman Sears circulated the agenda for this Commission's first meeting which included the following:

- 1- Call to Order
- 2- Ordinance to Establish a Housing Commission
- 3- Organization of Commission
- 4- Schedule of Meetings

Selectman Sears circulated a handout of the "Ordinance to Establish a Housing Commission" (attached) and went over its provisions. These include: Purpose; Duties; Membership Terms; and Organization.

Among the duties discussed were Part A: To study and analyze the housing needs of the Town and Part B: To recommend to the Board of Selectman and the Planning and Zoning Commissions housing policies and practices calculated to encourage the development and continued availability of affordable housing for the people of Washington. One commission member brought up the word "affordable" as a descriptor and the members briefly discussed using the word "moderate" instead. Dick Sears said this question needed to be part of an ongoing discussion which should include public input.

The members went on to discuss Part C under Duties, regarding the establishment of housing priorities and recommendations. It was felt that working toward a two percent moratorium would be a reasonable first goal.

The members were made aware that there is currently a Town budget line item for housing, but as of yet, no official "Housing Fund" has been created. Mr. Sears circulated a draft for a proposed ordinance to establish an affordable housing fund.

Members discussed ways to get feedback from the community about housing issues.

Mr. Sears circulated a memo (attached) from Dan McGuinness to the First Selectmen in surrounding towns on the issue of affordable housing. In it, Mr. McGuinness states that the definition of affordable housing most widely used is that given by the State. "---a house is considered "affordable" if a household earning 80% of the area's median income and spending no more than 30% of their income on housing costs can purchase the house." He goes on to say that in order to estimate the annual household income needed to purchase a single family house in the Region, a useful exercise is to do this by making the following assumptions: 1)the sales price is \$250000 2)a household can get a conventional 30 year mortgage at 6% interest 3)the household has \$50000 available for a down payment and closing costs 4)the household will spend no more than 30% of their gross annual income on housing costs. "-----According to US government estimates, the median family income in Litchfield County is about \$70200.----- In other words, families who have annual incomes approaching six figures are being shut out of the Region's housing market." Mr. McGuinness suggests that the term "workforce housing" rather than "affordable housing" more accurately describes the type of housing that is needed in the Region. He recommends supplementing local volunteer efforts with a part-time employee hired by The Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments to work with local housing groups.

The members discussed this information as well as other matters such as ways the Housing Commission could work with the Housing Trust to add value to producing productive outcomes on the housing issue. They also discussed how this Commission, like the other Commissions, were able to give specifics to the Planning Commission, which has the ultimate oversight and overview of where Washington should be heading. The discussion continued regarding the various ways in which the Housing Commission could serve the town.

Nominations were then entertained for Chairperson. Jean Suddaby nominated Don Brigham with Sue Werkhoven seconding the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Nominations were entertained for Vice Chairperson.

Sue Werkhoven nominated Liddy Adams and was seconded by Jean Suddaby. The motion was carried unanimously.

Don Brigham circulated a handout (attached) listing ten items that the Housing Commission needs to know more about in order to come up with answers and recommendations. Working on these items would also help clarify this commission's roles. These items included: Calculation of the 75 points to qualify for a moratorium; information from Mr. Santora of the DCED; and review of the Affordable Housing Appeals Act of the State Legislature.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45.

Next scheduled meeting of the Housing Commission is February 13, at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patte Doran, Secretary