Washington Housing Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 6:30 pm
Town Hall and on Zoom

Members present: Judie Gorra, Henrietta Small, Charles Jackson, Robert Woodroofe
Staff: Michelle Gorra
Public: Ann Jamieson (from Voices)

1. Meeting called to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. Review of Minutes March 12, 2024
   a. Charles moves to approve the minutes, Henrietta seconds, all in favor

3. Old Business
   a. Update on Baldwin Hill Property
      i. Judie shares that Bill walked the property with Inland Wetlands last week and they have asked
         for additional information before signing off.
      ii. Michelle shares that there is a discrepancy in the understanding of the ordinance, is the limit per
         expenditure or per project? Michelle suggests approximating costs and asking for approval on
         total cost instead of seeking approval each time (with consideration that some of the cost will
         be funded by the Department of Housing). Robert agrees and Judie suggests inviting the
         Housing Trust to join the Commission to discuss.
   
   b. Update on additional property being donated to the Washington Community Housing Trust
      i. The 30 acre property will close on April 12. It is estimated that the pre-development costs will
         be $350k.

   c. Update on 2024-25 budget request for $350,000
      i. Judie shares that the Selectmen only requested $150,000 despite being on board in initial
         meeting. This is a start, but leaves questions about final amount. This is a big ask given the
         Commission’s past asks.
      ii. Henrietta asks where the funds will come from. Michelle encourages Henrietta to raise this
          question at the next Selectmen’s meeting.
      iii. Budget will be voted on May 16, all members are encouraged to attend.

   d. Update on request for change in Housing Commission ordinance to include the purchase of
      land and structures for affordable housing projects.
      i. This was presented to the Selectmen, they voted unanimously to approve. Next it will be voted
         on at the town meeting on May 16.
e. Discussion of Playbook and Toolkit material developed by the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity.

i. Judie shares written piece from the Lakeville Journal about the need for affordable housing in Salisbury. She wonders if we should interview local business owners to collect quotes to make the case for Washington.
   1. Robert agrees and would be willing to collect quotes via interview.

ii. Michelle and her interns are working on getting the quotes we already do have onto the social media pages. There are plans to include announcements and possibly videos/interviews as well.

iii. Judie request that before the town meeting we pursue the multi-family housing regulations, encouraging accessory apartments, letters to the editor, and possibly attend a planning meeting.

iv. Robert shares that the 10% multi-family housing requirement was lowered to 6%. Michelle adds that the committee felt it was most beneficial in town centers, this would require Zoning to create these zones. The public hearing is Tuesday, May 28. Michelle encourages members to attend to support (and voice support) and to encourage others to attend as well.

v. Block Party June 7, Home Dedication on June 29, both are opportunities to get the word out. Michelle wonders which venue is most effective (including in front of the market) and where the energy should be invested.

vi. Henrietta poses a question about targeting messaging and finding the people who would most benefit and can support, not only bringing out the people opposed. Michelle believes sentiments are shifting and progress is being made. This needs to continue to grow support before the next big initiative.

vii. Charles proposes focusing on two priorities: working with Zoning, and supporting the Trust

viii. Judie encourages members to continue to review the Playbook and Toolkit for ideas and inspiration.

4. Motion to adjourn made by Robert, seconded by Henrietta, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carrie Loyd, Secretary

Link to meeting recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zX6PNm9d2Ok