

**Washington Housing Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:30 pm
In Person at Town Hall and on Zoom**

Members present: Judie Gorra, Carrie Loyd, Charlie Jackson, Robert Woodroffe, Henrietta Small

Staff: Michelle Gorra

Public: Ann Jamieson (from *Voices*), Bill Fairbairn, Lawrence Gendron, Chris Charles

- 1. Meeting called to order by Chair Judie Gorra at 5:33 p.m.**

- 2. Review of Minutes of October 17, 2023**
 - a. Robert asked for clarification on the minutes
 - b. Robert moved to adopt the minutes, Henrietta seconded. All approved.**

- 3. Old Business**
 - a. Report on Multi-family housing, PA 21-29 regulations in Washington**
 - i. Final draft went to the Planning Commission and was met with many questions. Judie handed out copies of the minutes from the meeting along with an article from *Voices* covering the meeting.
 - ii. Robert drafted a response in support of Janet Hill's memo and suggests that members of this Commission attend the next subcommittee meeting.
 - iii. Michelle shares that the Planning Commission understood the restrictions, but didn't feel they were appropriate for the small projects like houses being converted to units. They discussed a line being drawn as to where the restrictions come into place for numerous units (as opposed to in-law apartments).
 - iv. Commission next meets the first Wednesday in December.
 - v. Henrietta asked if the draft would be reviewed with the Housing Commission.
 1. Judie will send a draft, and Michelle is working on a one-pager summarizing the full report.

 - b. Baldwin Hill Project report – Bill Fairbairn presents an update.**
 - i. Bill thanks the Commission for the money for the survey and engineering.
 - ii. Engineering has been done and application for grant has been made (HTTC). Four Litchfield County properties applied for this grant and only one qualified (applications are considered on a points system).
 - iii. The projects are being combined into one application and will be resubmitted which will be helpful as it will in total be more units.

- iv. Ted Bent and Brad Sedito will take proposal from Segalla (modular housing contractor) and come up with a final number. Will meet with Selectmen and Board of Finance for discussion about the town's contribution. The cost of until will to the homeowner will be roughly \$180K, this cost will be backed out of the overall cost brought to the boards.
- v. Michelle asks about the timeline for the combined grant application. Bill replies that Lindsay Larson said it is in the works, but there is no final date. Bill has faith in the new Commissioner to move this forward.
- vi. Michelle reminds that there is some money in the housing fund currently. Judie reminds of the importance of getting the word out about these projects and the need for financial support. The town needs to buy into the need for these types of projects, what is the impact of a shrinking town otherwise.
- vii. Charlie asks if it is true that a town cannot accomplish the set goals, what the state will do. Will they step in and take over the projects?
 - 1. Bill answers that the state does set the parameters and can do whatever they see fit. Michelle adds that the state will not come in and build, 8-30g dictates that less than 10% affordable housing allows builders to circumnavigate zoning laws, but the state otherwise is focused elsewhere.
 - 2. Charlie summarized that the law is aspirational. The consequence is felt by implication in town when the population is affected.
 - a. Judie restates the urgency of getting the word out.

c. Report on Housing Affordability Summit October 23, 2023

- i. Judie shares report titled *Our Home, Our Future*. It includes interviews with people who have benefited from affordable housing initiatives.
 - 1. Robert brought these reports to St. John's last weekend and was met with interest.
- ii. Michelle adds that she attended workshops the week of the summit.
 - 1. Takeaways: looking at board to find gaps in talent (need for lawyer, builder, realtor, etc...); recruiting someone to attend meetings of the other commissions; flyers to recruit for commissions; subcommissions to recruit volunteers with specific interests seeking minimal commitment.

d. Recap of the Harvest Fest

- i. Review of list of names and contact information.

4. New Business - topics that Commission members wish to pursue.

- a. Henrietta proposes a lecture at the library to spread the word and draw interest.

- i. Michelle is doing something similar at the Southbury Library at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, November 18th.
- b. Oscar has created a Facebook page for the Housing Trust.
 - i. Plan is to share it out and ask commission and committee member to follow the page. For now it will be for posting to internal group as page and will not be open for public comment.
- c. Consideration of marketing strategies - maybe going to various groups besides the churches to inform the public about our mission and needs; for example, the senior center.
 - i. Judie will talk to Jen about the Senior Center.
 - ii. Our Lady and New Preston have not replied to Robert.
 - iii. Michelle suggests Lions Club and the Rotary.
- d. Robert shares a suggestion of the book *America's Frozen Neighborhoods*.
- e. Chris shares that we are in a position to decide how the development occurs and how we grow our community without the presence of a major developer.
 - i. Henrietta echoes the possibility that 8-30g could become a threat and take control away from the community.
 - ii. Charlie raises the idea that the newly approved hotel should be asked/required to support affordable housing for their future staff.
 - 1. Michelle adds that this isn't the purview of Zoning, but is something for the town to consider.
- f. Judie proposes adjusting the meeting time to be 6:30 p.m. to better accommodate schedules. **Charlie makes a motion, Henrietta seconds. All approved.**

5. Motion to adjourn made by Henrietta, seconded by Robert. All approved at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carrie Loyd, Secretary

Link to meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=905x9mu2hHc>