



Affordable Housing Committee

Town of Hinesburg

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Meeting Minutes – March 27, 2024 In-person and Zoom Meeting – 6:30 PM (Town Hall Third Floor Conference Room)

Committee Members Present: Carl Bohlen, Dave Nagel, Xander Patterson, Rocky Martin, Beth Whitlock, and Dale Wernhoff

Also Present: Alex Weinhausen (Hinesburg Director of Planning and Zoning), Barbara Forauer (Hinesburg Planning Commission member), and Travis Counter (Hinesburg Economic Development Committee Chair)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:35 PM.

Additions/Deletions to Agenda: There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

Town Plan Update Discussion, Alex Weinhausen will join us: Alex Weinhausen, Director of Planning and Zoning for the Town of Hinesburg, came to tonight's meeting to discuss town plan updates that are related to affordable housing. He was accompanied by Barbara Forauer, a member of the town's Planning Commission. Alex sent committee members the pertinent sections of the town plan via email and mail. The plan's housing section hasn't been updated since 2017. The Planning Commission would like feedback from all the town committees by the end of June. This will give the Planning Commission time to work through all the feedback and put the changes before the public in a fall hearing. Alex is willing to update all the demographic information, tables, and charts. He's also fine with splitting the writing if we want. What he really wants from us is for the committee to produce the action items for the plan; a list of what we're going to do, listed by priority. Potential ideas could come from the latest Housing Needs Assessment and from items we've already started or achieved.

Xander asked Alex if he had seen a post on the latest Front Porch Forum discussing a potential increase in required lot sizes for development, which would be detrimental to affordable housing. Alex stated that he had not seen it, but that there has been some confusion and opposition about a zoning change regarding one of our residential zoning districts. Alex is going to review the post and respond. Carl followed up by asking if this zoning change is on the agenda for the Select Board's 4/3/24 meeting. Alex said it is but it's just a work session to discuss the change.

Carl clarified with Alex that we should draft something, run it past Alex, and finalize our recommendations by the end of June, all during our regularly scheduled meetings over the next three months. Alex said yes, and we can give him all our recommendations in an informal format, a list in an email for example.

Carl asked if anyone is willing to investigate potential action items to discuss for our next meeting. If not, Carl is willing to take that on. Beth said she could look at some of the census items because she's familiar with them, and how that data has changed since the last census. Dave suggested we all look at the current plan and review it so we can come into the April meeting with our own thoughts. Carl asked Rocky how long the next plan would be in effect and Rocky said for at least five years.

ADU Forum Update (Part 1): Rocky provided an update regarding our forum from last fall. The Vermont Housing Improvement Program 2.0 (VHIP 2.0) launched on Monday, 3/25/24. Charlie Glassberg at Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) is the contact person for the program. Application materials will be on CHT's website soon. This is a \$50,000 grant program for the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Rocky is also trying to get more information from the State of Vermont Department of Public Safety regarding the requirements for permitting an ADU. The department determines if an ADU is a public building or not. If an ADU is determined to be a public building, you need many more permits during the building process, and part of that permitting is the requirement for a sprinkler system. Once Rocky gathers all this information he's going to forward it to the forum participants. Rocky has a suspicion that if an ADU is a rental, that could categorize it as a public building, but he's not sure about that.

General Discussion with Economic Development Committee: Travis Counter, Chair of the Hinesburg Economic Development Committee (HEDC), joined us to discuss how the lack of housing is affecting the town's economic development potential. Carl explained to Travis that we know the lack of housing affects both committees and we thought it might be good for our committees to stay in touch on issues regarding employee housing. Travis said the HEDC held a business forum last fall, and not being able to get employees due to the lack of affordable housing came up. As an example of the tight housing in town, Travis's manager at Good Times Café (Travis is the owner) had wanted to purchase a home in Hinesburg but ended up buying a residence in Bristol because that was the closest affordable housing he could find. Most of Travis's staff either live in town with their parents or out of town due to affordability and availability. One concern of the HEDC and a lot of Hinesburg businesses is that youths leave town for lack of opportunity or lack of housing.

The goal of the HEDC is to be the voice within the town and before the Select Board for businesses. They have been trying to get the Hinesburg Business Association (HBA) back together, but it's been a slow process. Dave said he likes their concept of having a voice for businesses in town, and that many of the businesspeople in town from 25 years ago have retired, so he applauds the HEDC for trying to get the HBA running again. Travis feels it's important to do this because businesses have their struggles and issues, particularly with staffing.

Carl told Travis some of the initiatives we've proposed, such as using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for affordable housing, starting a housing trust fund, authoring monthly articles in the local papers regarding affordable housing, and meeting with Vermont Smoke and Cure about their employee housing issues. Travis said it sounds like our two committees have similar issues. Xander said we could each be a supportive voice for the other committee. We all agreed, with Dale stating it would be good to work together on some of these topics because they are intertwined. Carl said he would share our minutes with him so the HEDC can see what we are working on. Carl

also mentioned that at the next Select Board meeting, Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity (GMHfH) will be requesting ARPA funds for a project on Mechanicsville Road, where six new affordable housing units may be coming to Hinesburg. It would be good to get GMHfH as much support from the community as we can. Travis thought that was great news, and to send him a reminder about that so he can chime in on it.

ADU Forum Update (Part 2): Carl asked Beth about a Burlington proposal for ADU infill. Beth stated that the problem with ADUs in Burlington is the fire code and its sprinkler requirement, not the zoning. The density did increase for ADUs except in the wealthier neighborhoods. She also said that per Burlington Planning and Zoning, if an ADU is classified as a duplex then you might be able to get around the ADU regulations.

Vermont Smoke and Cure Follow-Up: Roberta met with Kayla from Vermont Smoke and Cure. Andy will provide an update on that at our April meeting. Carl suggested asking Kayla about joining our committee since she is qualified as an employee in town.

Housing News Article Update: The third article in our series will be out tomorrow in *The Hinesburg Record* and next week in *The Citizen*. We need to work on the fourth article next. Dave said we've gone through two of the five topics from the housing needs assessment. Of the three left, based on experiences and prior interests, Dave thought he could tackle the one on senior housing, Xander has expressed interest in mobile homes, and the permitting article could be written by a committee member with a good understanding of those issues. We all agreed that sounded like a good game plan. We may bump one of these articles for one on GMHfH and ARPA.

Joe Laster Master Plan: The zoning line was not moved by the Select Board, so a portion of the project has less density. The result is a reduction in units on Joe Laster's master plan. Alex had argued that it had minimal impact, but the change was opposed by the Conservation Commission. The Select Board voted it down six to three.

Green Mountain Habitat Update: \$30,000 in ARPA funds is being requested by GMHfH for their six proposed units. Town Manager Todd Odit is requesting \$5000 per unit for eight units in the Windy Ridge development. That's a total of \$70,000 that may go towards affordable housing. Once we know for sure what the total ARPA fund request is for the two projects, we'll advocate for it before the Select Board.

2024 Fair Housing Proclamation: The 2024 proclamation has the same language as the 2023 version. Unless someone wants any changes, we'll leave it as is.

Project Updates: We have no news other than that GMHfH has closed on their property. They are also pleased with our support. Due to federal statutes, they can't hold properties for Hinesburg residents. There is a scoring system though which could make a Hinesburg resident score higher. Beth recalls that because of fair housing laws, the Kelley's Field expansion couldn't hold their new units for Hinesburg residents. The developer did want to cater to current residents, so they concentrated their advertising on the new units in the Hinesburg area. Carl said that would be a good topic to mention in one of our monthly articles. Beth suggested seeing if someone from GMHfH would like to be a guest author for that article. We all thought that was a good idea, with

Carl stating that he's thought about having guest authors from other organizations like CHT, Evernorth, and Cathedral Square.

CCRPC Housing Meeting April 18: The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is having a housing convening on April 18th. Carl can't make it and he's not sure about Alex. The event includes dinner. It is an in-person meeting; a Zoom meeting isn't feasible. Xander said he was going.

Consider Next Guests to Discuss Affordable Housing: Carl was wondering if the Conservation Commission would be a good guest for a future meeting. We've been on opposite sides with them on the neighborhood redevelopment designation on Windy Ridge and the zoning issue on the Joe Laster project. We all thought that was a great idea. We have ample respect for them and want to see if there is any common ground between us. Carl will see if we can meet with them in April.

Beth suggested meeting with someone from the Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB) for a future meeting. They are a major funding source. We decided to invite someone from there for the April meeting and move the Conservation Commission to our May or June meeting.

Rocky mentioned that as soon as GMHfH gets a plan together for their Mechanicsville Road project we wanted them to come to one of our meetings. That made Carl remember that he wanted to invite CHT to our May meeting because they were going to submit their application for Windy Ridge in June. We'll see how everything shakes out and proceed from there.

HAHC Membership Vacancies: For the second month in a row, we've had a member forced to resign due to moving out of town. Roberta MacDonald brought a lot of interesting ideas to the committee. Thanks for your commitment, Roberta!

We now have two vacancies. We've invited someone from one of the banks in town. We could also put a notification in the Front Porch Forum or invite Kayla from Vermont Smoke and Cure. Xander mentioned getting somebody from the demand side, a person who is looking for housing.

Approve Minutes from February 28th: We reviewed the 2/28/24 minutes. Rocky motioned they were to be approved and Xander seconded. They were approved with minor revisions by voice vote.

Motion to Adjourn: Xander made a motion to adjourn and Rocky seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 PM.

Next Meeting –

April 24th – Time and topics to be determined; see agenda on the town website.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Wernhoff
HAHC Secretary