



Affordable Housing Committee

Town of Hinesburg

10632 Route 116 Hinesburg VT 05461

802.482.2281 | hinesburg.org

Meeting Minutes – October 25, 2023 In-person and Zoom Meeting – 7:00 PM (Town Hall Third Floor Conference Room)

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

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:05 PM.

Additions/Deletions to Agenda: Carl forwarded an email from Town Manager Todd Odit with a possible funding source for our housing fund; we'll discuss this later tonight.

Public Comment: There were no members of the public present.

ADU Forum Final Planning: Rocky said we're all set for our ADU forum on 10/26/23. The dry run that he and Xander organized went well. Get there by 6:30 PM so we can set up tables and chairs. Carl will record the forum on his laptop, and any questions from attendees will be repeated so Carl doesn't have to spin his laptop from attendee to speaker. Rocky will be the point person so he will respond if there are any questions about the forum. Rocky said one or more of the presenters will have a PowerPoint-style presentation so that will be recorded as well.

Continue Discussion of Committee's Work Plan Priorities: At our 10/19/23 meeting, we fine-tuned our rankings of the issues list Carl had drawn up. Carl tried to reorganize the spreadsheet by the rankings we gave the items but had a complication, so he'll provide a revised version for our next meeting.

One of the issues was speaking to an in-town employer about the difficulties of employees finding affordable housing. Roberta said that Vermont Smoke and Cure would be very interested in discussing this with us. She also spoke with NRG and Frost Beer Works on this topic as well. Roberta mentioned the spouse of the brand manager at Vermont Smoke and Cure writes for *Seven Days* and may be able to do an article about what we are trying to accomplish.

Another issue was promoting our committee. Dave has volunteered to write some articles/blurbs for the local papers. He's going to alternate the topics between our most recent Housing Needs Assessment and other affordable housing issues. He'll have something for us at our next meeting.

Roberta was wondering if any residents from the Green Street Housing development, a 23-unit apartment complex (21 affordable and two market rate), would be willing to discuss what getting that housing means to them. Carl said he could check to see if any Green Street residents would be

willing to talk. Carl mentioned he could also check with a resident at Kelley's Field, who has shown an interest in affordable housing issues in the past, about speaking to the committee. Beth did a quick check of Champlain Housing Trust's website which has a list of testimonials with the residents' names and towns, so we may be able to find a speaker that way.

Update on Current Activities: Carl didn't check on the major developments in town as they are all in the Act 250 process right now. He shared the letter he wrote on behalf of the committee in support of the Windy Ridge project to the Community Partnership for Neighborhood Development Program, which is part of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). Carl also updated us on the mobile home park resident who apparently was dealing with a disreputable contractor. The resident received a grant for house repairs and improvements and hired a contractor. The contractor did substandard work, refunded half of the deposit, but billed the resident for the rest. The agency that provided the grant is aware of the situation.

Set Meeting Dates for November and December Meetings: Due to our normal fourth Wednesday of the month meeting schedule being so near the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, we came up with a revised schedule for the next couple of months. The game plan is to meet on 11/29/23 (the fifth Wednesday of November), skip the December meeting, and meet again on 1/24/24 (the fourth Wednesday of January, getting us back to our normal schedule). If something does come up that necessitates us meeting before 1/24/24, we'll add a meeting early in January.

Consider Next Guests to Discuss Affordable Housing: We all agreed we'd like to speak to a local business about affordable housing before we present our budget request for FY25 to the Select Board on 12/13/23, such as Vermont Smoke and Cure as discussed earlier. Roberta mentioned that Vermont Smoke and Cure is owned by Johnsonville Meats from Wisconsin. She would like someone from that company to zoom in as well.

Xander reminded us that we also want to talk to a banker about ADU financing. Dave stated that Mascoma Bank had a speaker at the Kelley's Field 2 project, so maybe someone from there would be willing to talk. Carl is going to investigate that.

Beth said she had heard about a program between workers and employer-provided housing. Looking further, she found it is part of the ACCD's Fair Housing and Anti-Discrimination Act, which provides rental assistance.

Continue Additions/Deletions to Agenda: Town Manager Todd Odit sent an email to Carl and the chairperson of the Hinesburg Conservation Commission. Since both organizations are financed by the town, Todd would like to look into a tax that would fund them. A tax rate of \$0.004 would raise about \$26,000 per year. Split down the middle, each group would receive \$13,000 per year. This would raise the taxes on a house assessed at \$400,000 by \$16 annually.

Dave said he would not be in favor of this when other town groups are funded directly from the town budget. Carl responded the difference is that we are asking for money that, if not used, would go into a reserve fund; most other town groups don't have that. Xander asked if there would be any issue if the tax rate didn't go through. Dale suggested that if it didn't, we just do a budget request as we've always done. Dave worried that we may end up going without any funds for a year, to which

Xander responded that we could make a budget request for FY25, and then plan on the tax rate to fund us after that. We decided it would be best to have Todd attend our next meeting so we can get a further explanation of how this would all work. Carl is going to check on Todd's availability since the Select Board will be meeting each Wednesday until the budget is done. Rocky stated he was concerned about presenting this as a tax, and Dave and Dale agreed. Carl mentioned it may not pass, and Rocky said we may need to do a campaign in support of it.

Approve Minutes from September 27th and October 19th: We reviewed the 9/27/23 minutes. Xander motioned they are to be approved and Rocky seconded. They were approved by voice vote. We then reviewed the 10/19/23 minutes. Dave motioned they are to be approved and Rocky seconded. They were approved by voice vote.

Motion to Adjourn: Xander motioned to adjourn, and Dave seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 PM.

Next Meeting –

October 25th – Time and topics to be determined; see agenda on the town website.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Wernhoff
HAHC Secretary