

**HOUSING COMMISSION
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX
HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, January 20, 2021**

Housing Commission (HC): Katie Ballard, Chair; Evan Einhorn, Vice Chair; Mia Watson, Clerk; Deb McAdoo; Mark Redmond; Gabrielle Smith; Michelle Teegarden.

Administration and Staff: Owiso Makuku, Essex Community Development Director; Robin Pierce, Essex Junction Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner; Deana Stoneback, Essex Zoning Administrative Assistant; Sharon Kelley, Essex Zoning Administrator

1. CALL TO ORDER AND AGENDA ADDITIONS / CHANGES

Ballard called the meeting to order at 3:06 PM. There were no proposed changes to the agenda.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

There were no members of the public present.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Approval of minutes

Redmond made a motion to approve minutes from January 6, 2021, seconded by Watson to approve.

b. Discussion on Agenda-Setting and Meeting Schedule

Smith started with question about what is expected of Housing Commission and where commission should begin. Watson suggested that the Commission develop a list of priorities then narrow initiatives down by scope/feasibility. Also suggested meeting with other housing commissions first to get ideas for initiatives.

Ballard noted that there are opportunities for engagement between groups. She recently attended meeting of the Essex Planning Commission. They are working on a residential zoning report.

Makuku noted that some important agenda items will be coming up that the Selectboard will want input on, including inclusionary zoning and zoning reform. Makuku asked if Commission would like to tackle items as sub-committees or entire commission, Schibler noted different committees have different tasks/structures that could be pursued. Makuku pointed out that entirely new Commission is opportunity for new outlook. Staff can help find speakers to support whatever priorities Commission identifies.

Ballard noted that Commission still plans to invite speakers to discuss senior housing, housing for people with disabilities, and refugee resettlement.

36 Watson noted that the learning period for the Commission could be extensive. Even
37 tentatively identifying options for initiatives could give structure, followed by bringing
38 in speakers on specific initiatives.

39 McAdoo asked about determining housing needs in Essex. Makuku shared the
40 [Housing Needs Assessment](#) completed by the town in 2019. Noted that zoning
41 reform will be a priority for the Selectboard, shared link to [2018 regulation audit](#).
42 Watson suggested that Commission review Executive Summary of Housing Needs
43 Assessment prior to next meeting.

44 Smith asked Commission to refer to purpose in charter, which was re-shared by
45 Schibler.

46 **c. Collaborations with Other Boards and Committees**

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48 Smith noted that she would like to speak to other housing commissions to know how
49 they are doing. Watson said that her manager at VHFA is on housing commissions
50 in South Burlington and Winooski. Redmond emphasized need to connect with
51 successful commissions. Schibler shared link to [recent webinar from Thriving
52 Communities](#) about starting housing commissions.

53 Commission agreed to develop questions and have each Commission member
54 reach out to member of another town commission to ask uniform list of questions.
55 Ballard noted that this is an opportunity for on-going networking and rapport building.
56 Committees were assigned to Commission members as follows:

57 South Burlington - Watson

58 Winooski - McAdoo

59 Jericho - Redmond

60 Shelburne - Einhorn

61 Richmond - Teegarden

62 Hinesburg - Smith

63 Montpelier – Ballard

64 Schibler will share list of questions brainstormed by members and contact
65 information for town commissions.

66 Makuku suggested that Commissioners record answers to questions as well as short
67 profile of town that they are covering. She suggested researching town median
68 income, population, area, home sale price and median rent. Schibler shared link to
69 www.housingdata.org, which includes basic community profiles.

70 Commission concluded discussion by agreeing that by next meeting Commissioners
71 will try to have initial conversation with assigned town committee member. Consider
72 emailing agenda to committee contact prior to phone call. Commissioners will send
73 summary and town profile to staff by end of day on February 1, to review before
74 meeting on February 3. Commissioners will present findings at meeting.

75 **d. Commissioner Profile: Mia Watson**

76 Watson described her personal background and professional work as Research &
77 Communications Coordinator at Vermont Housing Finance Agency. She developed
78 the community profiles on housingdata.org previously shared by Schibler. She
79 reviewed data on the site that may be useful to Commission and offered to share
80 more resources at a future date.

81 **4. Adjourn**

82 Einhorn volunteered to record minutes next meeting. Smith will present
83 commissioner profile at next meeting.

84 **Ballard adjourned the meeting at 4:33 PM.**

85

86 Minutes submitted by Mia Watson, Clerk