

**HOUSING COMMISSION  
(DRAFT)**

**TOWN OF ESSEX  
HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, March 2, 2022**

**Housing Commission (HC):** Katie Ballard, Chair; Mia Watson, Clerk; Mark Redmond; Michelle Teegarden; Emily Taylor

**Administration and Staff:** Sharon Kelley, Essex Zoning Administrator; Robin Pierce, Essex Junction Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND AGENDA ADDITIONS / CHANGES**

**Ballard called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM.** Ballard proposed to add a discussion topic about Commission Membership and an update on the Inclusionary Zoning Developer Roundtable.

**2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

There were no members of the public present.

**3. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**a. Commissioner Membership**

Ballard: Commissioner Levy needs to take a brief leave of absence from the Housing Commission for about 6 months. The Commission would look to have a temporary member appointed. Ballard plans to bring this to the Trustees and Select Board with the recommendation that the temporary position be offered to someone who had applied in the past. Though it may be difficult to fill, there could be an opportunity to have someone be a standing fill in if Commissioners are absent or on leave.

**b. Approval of Minutes**

**Redmond made a motion, seconded by Taylor, to approve the minutes of February 16, 2022. The motion passed 4-0.** Ballard abstained since she was not present at that meeting.

**c. Inclusionary Zoning Developer Roundtable Update**

Watson: Developer Roundtable is scheduled for Wednesday, March 9th at 10:30am on Zoom and in-person. There has been outreach to Watson and Redmond regarding the roundtable and conversation has been good so far. Prepared to have challenging conversations around the cost of inclusionary zoning and development process. Emphasized that the main goal is to increase inclusive housing in the community. Watson and Redmond will report back during the March 16 Housing Commission Meeting with updates.

**d. Community Forum Planning / Logistics**

36 Ballard: Goal is to develop a purpose for the forum, who should be invited, when and  
37 where it should be held, and what the Commission hopes to gain from the forum. In  
38 order to be inclusive to the community, the Commission will want to invite a wide  
39 group of members to introduce ourselves to and then gain a framework for future  
40 forum meetings, and to let the community know what we will be working on in the  
41 future.

42 Schibler: Other groups will host at a neutral site and have documentation available  
43 for people to take with them. Some groups also find locations to use or attend other  
44 meetings to meet community members. A virtual hybrid option makes sense to get  
45 more engagement, especially from members who can't attend in person.

46 Kelley: Hybrid setting during a time of day that might allow for more engagement  
47 may work best. Introductions from the Commissioners make sense to educate the  
48 forum and help participants get comfortable before we can begin to ask what they're  
49 looking for from the Housing Commission.

50 Taylor: Susan's Place on Susie Wilson Road might be a good option since there is  
51 large community space that isn't being used, ample parking, and a specific  
52 community room with bathroom and exterior door that can be used without  
53 compromising resident's confidentiality. We do not have technology set up in the  
54 community area though. Schibler says the Town may be able to assist with setting  
55 up technology.

56 Ballard confirmed that the Housing Commission will host one virtual forum held  
57 during the Commission Meeting on May 4th, and one in person; community is invited  
58 to both though not required to attend both. The in-person option will be held from  
59 6:00-7:00PM on a later date depending on location; Ballard will talk with Smith and  
60 the Rotary Club about scheduling. Plan to finalize date for the second event at the  
61 next Commission meeting.

62 **e. Work Group Organization**

63 Ballard: Smith and Levy both need to step back from Housing Trust Fund workgroup  
64 for personal reasons. Inclusionary Zoning has been successful in their vision and  
65 workflow. Ballard, Smith, Teegarden and Taylor would form a second workgroup  
66 encapsulating Housing Trust Fund and Outreach work, including short term rentals  
67 and fire codes.

68 Taylor: Comfortable with the groups merging but apprehensive about getting up to  
69 speed with the Housing Trust Fund work; policy and presentations.

70 Ballard: Current thought is the group would work together to disperse enough  
71 separate work without taking too much on. Short term rentals could be worked on  
72 with Smith and Taylor. Smith, Taylor, and Ballard could work on the fire codes.

73 Housing Trust Fund work could be focused on by Ballard, Levy, and temporary  
74 position, with Taylor supporting the presentation. Teegarden can continue working  
75 on landlord outreach.

76 Taylor left the meeting at 4:01PM.

77 **f. Other Business**

78 **i. Follow-Up on Development Review Process Discussion**

79 The Commission briefly discussed the presentation that Darren Schibler made during  
80 the last meeting. Pierce added that while we can make improvements to the  
81 development review process, it is important to not interfere too much with a currently  
82 functional system. Sharon Kelly noted that some development applications can turn  
83 around quickly, but others can take several months. Watson noted that she would like  
84 to understand more about by-right development and under which conditions we could  
85 expand it. Schibler noted that this is being explored to better communicate  
86 development criteria and expand administrative review, but it is a complicated issue.  
87 Kelley added that it is difficult to make zoning regulations that can account for every  
88 possible scenario.

89 **ii. Town Zoning Updates Collaboration**

90 Schibler described how the Town Planning Commission is currently working  
91 updating zoning. This includes updating the Town Center Master Plan, bylaw  
92 modernization, and increasing flexibility to promote housing, including ADUs. Ballard  
93 said she would like the Trustees and Selectboard to continue to clarify the roles of  
94 the different commissions so that the Housing Commission could better understand  
95 how it should interact with that process.

96 **iii. Village Separation**

97 Ballard asked that the Commission discuss its plan for Village separation at the next  
98 meeting. This will include a discussion of whether the Commission should separate  
99 or stay joint. This issue should be decided by April meeting so that the Commission  
100 can draft a letter to the Selectboard and Trustees. Watson asked what the timeline  
101 around this decision was governed by. Ballard replied that the Selectboard has  
102 requested input by June. Schibler added that assuming separation does get  
103 approved by the Legislature, the official transition period will run through June 2023.  
104 Teegarden noted that this issue will likely come up during the public forum in May,  
105 and the Commission should be prepared to discuss.

106 **4. Reading File**

107 Ballard noted that a recent article about evictions of low income tenants in Winooski  
108 has caused concern that the same thing could happen in Essex.

109

110 **5. Adjourn**

111 **Ballard called meeting to close at 4:27 pm.**

112

113 Minutes prepared by Emily Taylor, reviewed and submitted by Mia Watson, Clerk.