

HOUSING COMMISSION

TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, May 19, 2021

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

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

1. CALL TO ORDER AND AGENDA ADDITIONS / CHANGES

Einhorn (acting chair in Ballard's absence) called the meeting to order at 3:06 PM. Agenda changes in light of Ballard's absence and Redmond's need to leave at 4:00: Postpone item **d** (Proposed Affordable Units at Wilson's End Place) and reading file discussion to next meeting.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

There were no members of the public present.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Approval of Minutes

SMITH made a motion, seconded by MCADOO, to approve the minutes of April 7, 2021 as written. The motion passed 6-0.

b. Discussion on Minutes Process

McAdoo inquired about using municipal funds (\$50/meeting) to pay a minute taker for future meetings and volunteered to supervise that person if approved.

Schibler reported that CCTV (channel 17) could take over HC meeting recordings and asked the group if we would want that. Will address in next meeting.

c. Work Group Updates

i. Housing Trust Fund (reported by Smith)

Smith spoke with Polly Nichols from the Montpelier Housing Commission to learn more about their Housing Trust Fund which has been successful and well received as an annual city budget line item (\$125,000/year) by Montpelier community. There was discussion about how our HC could adopt some of their strategies, funding sources, and the challenges of tying funding to Town/Village property taxes.

Worthwhile pursuing even considering the possible separation of Town/Village when

both would contribute to the fund. Watson suggested, in that event, the need for an attorney to be employed to assure jointly shared Housing Trust Fund is properly distributed. Schibler will look into that.

ii. Inclusionary Zoning for Housing (reported by Redmond)

Watson has now joined this work group. Central issue is whether or not inclusionary zoning should be mandatory or voluntary and in towns where mandatory, what % of developers/builders opt in w/incentives. South Burlington Select Board has imposed mandatory IZ and developers do not have trouble complying – SB pushes density bonuses (and has three tiers of affordability, per Schibler). However, Essex cannot be accurately compared to SB and B-ton. Einhorn is doing ongoing research on location issues with developers. Makuku added that we need research on incentives, i.e. Essex as a desirable place to build.

i. Rental Registry/Landlord Survey (reported by Teegarden, Watson, McAdoo)

Commission agreed to table this working group for now, at least until the likely passage of the Rental Registry Bill in the VT Senate (S.79). Re: Landlord Survey – Work group members spoke with Heather Carrington (Winooski) about their long standing survey which pre-dates Heather’s work. Watson believes they have good data but it takes years of consistent compliance to establish useful information. At this stage, the Essex Housing Commission do not have specific questions for landlords to conduct a helpful survey. Smith suggested an alternative third working group to focus on communications to the Select Board, Trustees, and the surrounding community. Also recommended that we discuss in next meeting, the process of providing short Commission updates to the Select Board.

d. Commissioner/Staff Profile: Darren Schibler

Darren grew up in Santa Clara, CA and experienced life in both a mobile home and “traditional” homes – as well as being exposed to multiple cultures and races (more so than in VT!) Strong interest in nature and the outdoors led him to UVM to study Natural Resources and stayed in VT after graduation. His career journey began at the UVM library and volunteer work on a conservation committee as well as the Chittenden County Planning Committee (the latter where his passion for planning emerged). Eventually hired for the Town Planner position in Essex and still remains involved w/conservation trails. Darren enjoys contra/folk dancing and he and his wife, Heather, maintain abundant vegetable gardens at their home, sharing much of the bounty with the community - which exemplifies his living by the credo: “Make your little corner of the world better.”

4. Establishing a schedule for future meetings

Commission agreed to schedule for future full meetings - 3rd Wednesday of the month. Next meeting: **Wednesday, June 16**

5. Adjourn

**EINHORN made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by SMITH.
Approved 6-0 at 4:25 PM.**

Minutes prepared by Michelle Teegarden. Reviewed and submitted by Mia Watson, Clerk.