

HOUSING COMMISSION

TOWN OF ESSEX
HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Housing Commission (HC): 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.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND AGENDA ADDITIONS / CHANGES

Einhorn called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM.

There were no proposed changes to the agenda. Smith asked to include Selectboard prioritization of housing to discuss of business item 3.d., Outreach & Communications Strategies, which was agreed to. Schibler mentioned that the next meeting in July will likely be in-person but did not have further details at present.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Diane Clemens of the Village Planning Commission attended but did not have initial comments.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Approval of Minutes

McAdoo made a motion, seconded by Einhorn to approve the minutes from May 19, 2021. The motion passed 6-0.

b. Discussion on Minutes Process

Continued discussion on whether Commission members will hire note taker. Schibler reminded Commissioners that they can pay for a notetaker personally, but it is separate from Housing Commission business. Commissioners agreed to pursue this on their own time.

c. Work Group Updates

i. Housing Trust Fund

Smith asked Commission about direction of working group, given possible separation between Town and Village. Previous discussions of Housing Trust Fund (HTF) had highlighted potential difficulty in proposing a new tax to support the fund, and how the fund would be divided and managed in the event of a separation.

36 McAdoo asked Smith to remind Commission about potential uses of the fund. Smith
37 replied that it could be used for a variety of purposes, including affordable rental
38 housing development or home repairs or accessibility improvements.
39

40 Watson suggested that the working group could still do some work on the HTF
41 regardless of separation outcomes, including a list of prioritized uses for the fund,
42 model language, and several potential funding sources. The work could continue
43 until the Commission learns more about separation. Makuku said she would speak
44 to the Town Finance Department about possible tax options. Schibler mentioned that
45 local option sales tax under current review could be considered.
46

47 Smith agreed to work with Schibler and Ballard to work on model framework for HTF
48 to be brought to Commission and staff to discuss. Watson offered to help while
49 Ballard is unable to attend meetings.
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51 **ii. Inclusionary Zoning**

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53 Redmond and Einhorn did not have anything new to report. Redmond asked Watson
54 to connect them with members of the South Burlington Affordable Housing
55 Committee to learn about their experiences with IZ. Schibler suggested including
56 Ned Daily and Patrick Sheld on the Planning Commissions in the meeting.
57

58 **iii. Rental Registry/Landlord Survey**

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60 This item was awaiting passage of the Rental Safety bill in the VT Senate
61 (S.79). The bill would make a rental registry in Essex redundant. The bill did not
62 pass during the regular session, however, there is a chance it will pass during the
63 upcoming veto session. The Commission discussed whether to continue the work in
64 the event that the bill does not pass. Watson and Schibler discussed significant
65 challenges in setting up a rental registry independently, given that there is no
66 existing comprehensive data source for rentals. Diane Clemens said that Planning
67 Commission wanted more information on density of rental units to inform land
68 development code and was concerned that the State might not pass the bill. Schibler
69 recommended using Decennial Census data to be released later in the year.
70

71 Commission discussed other items the working group could do while awaiting
72 passage of S.79. Watson mentioned connecting residents with federal relief
73 services. Smith suggested the need to communicate with landlords and asked what
74 information Commission would want to know. McAdoo and Teegarden agreed to
75 drafted list of outreach questions to share at next meeting.
76

77 **d. Outreach & Communications Strategies**

78
79 Smith discussed creating a report on Housing Commission progress to Selectboard
80 and Board of Trustees and possibly appear in form of the boards. Schibler reminded
81 Commission that they will have the opportunity to prepare and annual report for town

82 meeting. Smith suggested adding the item to the agenda for July meeting, Einhorn
83 agreed.

84

85 **e. Housing Development Projects Update**

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87 Schibler presented Commission with reports on two new housing projects brought
88 before Planning Commissions.

89

90 **i. 81 Susie Wilson Rd (Richard Bouffard)**

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92 The project will include a PUD for 12 new homeowner units added to 12 existing
93 ones, including 6 permanently affordable units. The project will be reviewed by the
94 PC on 6/24/21. Schibler noted that the developer does not yet have a plan for
95 managing compliance for permanent affordability, although they are speaking with
96 Champlain Housing Trust to see if that is a possibility. Watson expressed support for
97 the project in general but highlighted the difficulty in managing compliance for sold
98 homes. She suggested Schibler speak with planners from South Burlington who may
99 have experience with this issue under their inclusionary zoning policy.

100

101 **ii. Carmichael Street (Rick Bove)**

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103 The project will include 52 new apartments across 3 buildings, with a requested
104 density bonus. Schibler told Commission that the project was initially denied due to
105 site issues. There are ground floor apartments on a main street that may be too loud
106 for residents, and the design does not support that density. The Planning
107 Commission would like to approve the project if issues are resolved. Staff are
108 encouraging more common space and suggested a parklet replacing excessive
109 parking spaces. Smith suggested building be moved back for room between street
110 while preserving living space on ground floor. Makuku said that the planners want
111 developers to engage the street space. Diane Clemens expressed concerns that the
112 area has too little green space and area for recreation.

113

114 **4. Reading File**

115 [Bill to Establish a Vermont Rental Property Registry Falls Short — for Now](#)

116 This item was discussed as part of business item 3.c.iii. Rental Registry/Landlord
117 Survey.

118

119 **5. Adjourn**

120 **Einhorn made a motion, seconded by McAdoo, to adjourn the meeting. The**
121 **motion passed 5-0 at 4:36 PM.**

122

123 Minutes prepared and submitted by Mia Watson, Clerk.