

## HOUSING COMMISSION

### TOWN OF ESSEX HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, August 18, 2021

**Housing Commission (HC):** Katie Ballard, Chair; Gabrielle Smith, Vice Chair; Mia Watson, Clerk; Michelle Teegarden.

**Administration and Staff:** Owiso Makuku, Essex Community Development Director; Darren Schibler, Town Planner

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

Ballard called the meeting to order at 3:04 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. Minutes**

WATSON made a motion, seconded by TEEGARDEN, to approve the minutes of July 21, 2021 as written. The motion passed 4-0.

##### **b. Polly Nichol, Montpelier Housing Task Force**

(Follow up from BALLARD's interview w/Polly regarding Housing Trust Fund)

Polly provided an overview of the Montpelier Housing Task Force/Committee: Established in 1999 with focus on education, advocacy for expanding the Housing Trust Fund, improved quality of housing, new housing development, hosting winter shelter for those without homes, etc. Additionally shared other accomplishments/initiatives:

- Housing awareness campaigns
- Created Home Share program (now run out of Burlington)
- Launched program to encourage creation of ADUs
- Maintaining a presence at city council and planning meetings

BALLARD asked about NIMBY issues – Polly reported that it's a significant problem in Montpelier – so they direct focus on ADUs which are less visible; making sure zoning doesn't require special permits, etc. Polly also said they are considering another educational campaign re: housing prices, large volume of individuals/families who can't find affordable homes; identify action steps an individual can do to help.

WATSON asked if Montpelier HC has met its goal of achieving funding for 5-10 households. Per Polly, due to huge increase in housing costs this year it has been especially difficult but helped first time home buyers – and the city helps with down

payment which is repaid when home is re-sold. However, \$15K from city is still not sufficient.

BALLARD asked if any COVID relief funds are being utilized: Should be looked into, per Polly but it hasn't happened yet. Much being spent on new construction so those funds could be a good opportunity for Essex.

SMITH asked how to advise Essex HC re: Essex housing needs, communication, etc. Per Polly: Communicate in local paper (if available) and Front Porch Forum – but readership is low so need to be active on social media. Consider community forums, and meetings w/local business leaders about their needs. Other suggestions:

- Work with other communities' housing commission to address at large housing issues.
- Talk with State officials
- Work with Regional Planning Commission

BALLARD proposed housing meeting/summit – CVOEO for statewide initiatives and learn from other regions.

WATSON reports that research is ongoing (VHFA) and that very low inventory is driving this problem (among others such as smaller household sizes).

### **c. Future Meeting Scheduling**

Discussion returning to holding HC meetings twice monthly (per Housing Assessment directive) to improve continuity and communication with all members.

SMITH made a motion, seconded by BALLARD, to change Housing Commission meetings to previously appointed schedule of 3:30-5:30pm, on the first and third Wednesday of each month. The motion passed 4-0.

SCHIBLER to contact Redmond and McAdoo asap regarding this passed motion.

BALLARD checking in with Zoning and Planning to get more clarity regarding what they need from HC. Need to communicate that goal is to request time on their October meeting agenda for presentation from the Inclusionary Zoning work group.

SCHIBLER: Request Planning and Zoning, Select Board, Trustees from Town/Village to dedicate meeting for joint meeting w/HC to provide clarity of HC role for all groups.

SMITH: If we propose a budget for HC – should work with other planning groups that have overlapping needs and goals.

WATSON: We should explain IZ working group will need staff time and commitment. Would like minimum 15 minutes + question time at October meeting. ADUs are not being included in IZ.

**d. Work Group Updates**

**i. Housing Trust Fund**

BALLARD: Resource gathering and research underway; drafting wording for funding sources and how funding can be used; identifying who would be responsible for determining, prioritizing projects, etc.

SMITH: How to distill it down to an actual proposal; impact of Town/Village separation. Many new rentals coming into EJ – many need to rent since unable to make a down payment on a home. Where do we go next?

Drafting document to bring back to HC with language defining what HTF would do, funding stream suggestions; Trust Fund folder includes guidance; Housing Assessment guide was very specific about how HTF would be utilized. Budget, funding, usage, who's responsible for allocation. SCHIBLER: Joint meeting should provide guidance on how to proceed. Possibly ask Andrew Brown (Chair of Jct Trustees) to present at HC meeting.

WATSON: Need to coordinate IZ as HTF funding stream; Sources for HTF – consider assistance from other sources and not duplicate efforts.

**ii. Inclusionary Zoning**

WATSON: Research on policies in other communities: Hinesburg, Burlington, S. Burlington, Cambridge, MA. Many similarities and nuanced differences but can provide guidance.

Bring in stakeholders (developers) – but need Select Board buy-in.

IZ bring full presentation to HC before presenting to Select Board/Trustees. Next available Select Board/Trustees October 19 and 25. Present to HC at Sept. 15 meeting. WATSON will send prep documents in advance and suggest an informational article. (Check Housing Assessment document for IZ expectations – IZ should not be relied upon for HTF (per MAKUKU).

**iii. Landlord Outreach/Housing Survey**

TEEGARDEN reported briefly (w/meeting time running out): TEEGARDEN and MCADOO meeting with Mark Demers (CVOEO Landlord Liaison) on Sept. 17 regarding housing survey strategies.

Contacted Richmond Town Planner, Ravi Venkataraman, who reported on success of their housing survey (for both Richmond residents and residents of surrounding communities). Used grant funding to hire consultant, Brandy Saxton, to develop and administer survey. Advised that it was a Municipal Planning Grant – Agency of Commerce & Community Development.

MCADDOO is looking into applying for that grant but will need HC commissioner approval to submit.

- e. SCHIBLER reported that the vacancy for housing commissioner has been posted.
- f. Next meeting: September 1, 2021

#### **4. Adjourn**

BALLARD made a motion, seconded by TEEGARDEN to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 3-0 at 4:38 PM.

Minutes prepared by Michelle Teegarden.

Minutes submitted by Mia Watson, Clerk.