

TOWN OF ESSEX
HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, September 1, 2021

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

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

Guests/Members of the Public: Emily Taylor, Amy Demetrowitz, Champlain Housing Trust (CHT)

CALL TO ORDER AND AGENDA ADDITIONS / CHANGES

Ballard called the meeting to order at 3:33 PM. There were no proposed changes to the agenda.

1. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Emily (CHT) Resident Manager at Susan's Place on Susie Wilson Road (old Baymont Suites) 68 units. Emily helps to manage, also has a night manager.

2. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Meeting Minutes Approval

SMITH - amended the listing of Commissioners to reflect her as the Vice Chair.

WATSON made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, TEEGARDEN seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Champlain Housing Trust Proposal for Recovery Housing at Fort Ethan Allen

Amy (CHT) bought a building from UVM. 19 buildings converted to condos. Three buildings, approached by Vermont Foundation for Recovery to be developed for recovery housing. Partnered together, 12 units each for recovery. 2 apartments on each of 2 floors. Family environment by floor, providing group living for residents to provide care and support to each other. 1 for men, 2 for women. New approach - family reunification. The center building will be half families and the other for transitional housing. Started planning in 2019, included a public process in Essex. Funding from VT Community Development Program - requested, not funded due to COVID. Another application to the VT Community Development Program through a different funding source to apply on behalf of the Town of Essex. Going before the Selectboard on September 13. Had opposition and support. Essex Selectboard voted unanimously to support. Police Chief requested gradual occupancy. CHT agreed. Seeking our support in front of the Essex Selectboard.

Discussion: BALLARD - asked for a description of the opposition. Amy - varied levels. Some were concerned that existing occupants would be relocated. They were, all requirements followed, gave them time and support, yet still caused opposition. Stormwater/sewer concerns. Also traditional stigma-based concerns about people in recovery.

SMITH moved that the Housing Commission authorize the Chair to work with staff on a letter of support (to be included in the SB meeting packet) for Champlain Housing Trust's application to the Vermont Community Development Program for the Fort Ethan Allen Recovery Housing Project. Watson seconded with a friendly amendment that the letter be sent to the full Housing Commission and that comments or edits be sent to the Chair and staff. The motion passed 4-0.

b. Debrief Aug. 23rd Update to Selectboard and Trustees

SMITH presented to the Selectboard based on notes she shared on Google Drive: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zGYjSpkmm3RlwQzs6vqm6TWwAJNkInvUn4FhzF4fv1s/edit?usp=sharing>

Discussion - WATSON - consider developing an information sheet. BALLARD - include stories from people affected by affordable housing measures. TEEGARDEN - consider FAQs, reference the Housing report (2018) Darren - VHFA has great handouts for each municipality. We could use the one for Essex.

c. Future Meeting Scheduling

Discussion - The former time of meeting from 3 - 4:30 is better for staff. The later time is harder for them. Commission members present were supportive of considering reverting back to the earlier time, however, BALLARD tabled further discussion until the next meeting when the other Commissioners are present.

d. Working Group Updates

Resident Survey - TEEGARDEN - she and Deb to meet with Mark Demers of CVOEO and Richmond...Commerce and Community Development Grant to have a consultant create the survey. Deb willing to write. BALLARD - ok to draft and then bring to the full board.

- I. Inclusionary Zoning - met yesterday. Agreed on the outline of the IZ presentation to deliver to the Boards in October. Mia and Mark to present to the Commission on September 15.
- II. Housing Trust Fund - To present to the full Commission on October 6 to prepare for a presentation to the Joint Boards.

f. Community Outreach

Discussion. Ongoing priority for the board: presentations to the boards, resident survey, FAQs.

3. Adjourn

Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:54 PM.

Minutes prepared by Gabrielle Smith, Vice Chair

Minutes submitted by Mia Watson, Clerk