

Minutes

Housing Trust Fund Task Force Meeting #4

May 11, 2016

- 1) Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Debbie Ingram at 7:35 a.m.

Task Force members present: Debbie Ingram, Charlie Magill, and Kenn Sassorossi, Ted Brady, Scott Rieley and Benjamin King

Staff Present: Ken Belliveau, Planning Director; Rick McGuire, Town Manager

Others Present: Jake Mathon, Chair of the Planning Commission; and Charlie Baker, Executive Director of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

- 2) Minutes: April 26, 2016 - No corrections were made and Chair declared them accepted.

- 3) Discussion:

- a) Charlie Baker – Mr. Baker explained that the availability of housing is frequently cited by employers as posing a difficulty for them to hire workers for their business. Mr. Baker commented on the mix of housing in Williston. Ken Belliveau explained that until recently the town was heavily skewed towards single family homes but that is changing as Finney Crossing is built out. Newer homes being constructed tend to have fewer bedrooms. Mr. Baker stated that about 1000 people are moving to Chittenden County each year.

Mr. Rieley in his business is seeing a steady climb in the vacancy rate in Chittenden County but in comparison to the rest of the Country it is still low.

Mr. Sassorossi asked if Mr. Baker is aware of what other communities are doing. Mr. Baker mentioned South Burlington, Burlington, Charlotte, and Montpelier as either having a Trust Fund or starting one. Essex Junction and Hinesburg have both discussed affordable housing at the community level.

According to Mr. Baker the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is making planning funds available to communities to update their zoning including South Burlington, Westford village and Winooski.

Mr. Sassorossi asked if the RPC might have any funds available for use in planning a trust fund. Mr. Baker explained that only if the study relates to housing in growth center with a strong nexus with transportation it might be an eligible use. The funding cycle starts with an application in December or January and if approved funding available starting in July. Mr. Belliveau mentioned the state planning grants as an option which has an application in the fall.

- b) Jake Mathon – Mr. Mathon was invited to talk about the direction the Town Plan is taking as it undergoes review. Ms. Ingram suggested the Task Force does not want to take a position that is contrary to the direction the Planning Commission is taking with the Town Plan.

Mr. Mathon explained that the Planning Commission has discussed the Growth Management process with no clear consensus yet. He suggested that showing what lots are left for development will help determine if growth management is needed in the future. There is a limit on the number of developable lots and the number is growing smaller with each passing year.

Mr. Belliveau suggested a first step might be to exempt affordable housing from the growth management caps. Mr. Baker asked what is defined as affordable. Mr. Belliveau responded this is still being worked out. He noted there is still a segment of the community who are opposed to any kind of development.

Mr. Rieley explained that density is problematic given the fact that parking is a major factor. Each unit typically demands two cars.

- c) General Discussion: Ms. Ingram suggested the Task force share its ideas on their vision for Williston. She would like to see housing that is affordable to people who work in Williston.

Mr. Rieley said that through his business they are experiencing close to a saturation point for apartments that are 100% of median and somewhat above. He explained that the trend is for older couples to downsize directly into apartments rather than to a condo. He believes market should drive homeownership not a Trust Fund. Nationwide homeownership has been declining. Mr. Rieley said developers are looking for ways of making homes more affordable.

Mr. Sassorossi stated there will not be a lot of money available initially. If we have a trust fund, we can help people move into existing homes they might not otherwise afford. He advocates creating homeownership opportunities.

Mr. Mathon suggested not using the trust fund for funding programs where funding is already available.

Mr. Brady is not as concerned about the types of housing but rather who the housing serves based on affordability. He believes funding should be targeted to the most needy.

Mr. King explained that he believes the focus on of the Trust should be on single family homes rather than apartments. Mr. Magill agreed stating single family homes tend to bring greater stability to the Town.

Jake noted he frequently hears from developers that the infrastructure costs are too high and wonders if trust fund money's could be used to offset or reduce this cost to make new homes more affordable.

- 4) Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for May 25th at 7:30 a.m. with no planned speaker.
- 5) Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 a.m.