

Minutes

Housing Trust Fund Task Force Meeting #5

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Debbie Ingram at 5:10 p.m.
2. Task Force members present: Debbie Ingram, Charlie Magill, and Kenn Sassorossi, and Benjamin King, Ted Brady.

Staff Present: Rick McGuire, Town Manager

3. Minutes: May 11, 2016 – Approve by consensus with no comments. No comments were offered for the notes of the May 25, 2016 meeting.
4. Discussion: Ms. Ingram suggested using documents prepared by Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) as a basis for discussing issues, particularly the programmatic elements. Ms. Ingram suggested for administrative elements might include working with CHT

Discussion on local priorities: It was suggested by Mr. Magill that since tax dollars are involved, homeownership should be the primary focus. Ms. Ingram and Mr. Sassorossi suggested there is a need for both. Mr. King suggested that for those interested in downsizing there are few affordable options. Mr. Magill stated he believes homeownership provides more stability to the community.

Preservation vs. new construction: Mr. Sassorossi explained that to fund rental housing, a large amount of money is needed. The source of the money is also important in determining how funds should be used. Net new construction is more important than preservation because of the makeup of the town. (net new affordable units)

Housing Targets: There was a brief discussion on the housing targets. Ms. Ingram referenced the Town's bylaws.

Ted Brady joined the meeting. Mr. Magill explained how Habitat for Humanity works. They buy land and work to permit and build new housing with the assistance from volunteers. The houses are sold with a 20 to 25-year loan at zero interest and the owner is required to invest some of their time towards construction of the home. The homes are required to be perpetually affordable. There are no homes of this type in Williston. Mr. Sassorossi explained the shared appreciation approach is used by other organizations including the Champlain Housing Trust.

After a brief discussion, it was a consensus that the county income numbers should serve as the bar for determining eligibility.

Community goals: It was believed that there are other mechanisms for achieving community goals that are proven and therefore it may not be necessary to build additional incentives into the Trust Fund.

Revenue Source: Property taxes are a common source. Payments in lieu of certain requirements is another possible source. Mr. Brady suggested a conversation with the Town's Conservation Commission. Mr. McGuire explained the status of the Environmental Reserve Fund. Mr. Brady explained he is not advocating a reduction in the ERF but rather an increase in the total amount being contributed to the fund. He suggested the equivalent of a penny on the tax rate. Task Force members suggested requesting that Ken Belliveau research whether or not impact fees can be used to support affordable housing. Mr. Brady noted that every time a piece of land is conserved, it increases the value of other properties. It was suggested that some form of ballot initiative might make sense.

Mr. Brady volunteered to contact the Conservation Commission. Mr. McGuire agreed to provide him with contact information for the Chair. Mr. Magill suggested setting goal of \$100,000 per year as contributions to the Trust Fund. Mr. Brady asked if the funding should be restricted to the geographic boundary. Consensus was that it should.

Who is eligible to apply? Task Force members agreed the emphasis should be on flexibility and could include developers or potential homeowners. The model envisioned is using an intermediary to administer the fund. It was agreed that some group needs to develop an annual work plan with validation by the Selectboard upon receiving an annual report at the end of each year.

5. Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for November 2nd at 5:00 p.m. with no planned speaker.
6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.