

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness**  
**Organizational Meeting**  
**Friday, February 17, 2023, 5:00 PM**  
**Hartford Town Hall, Room 312**  
**171 Bridge Street, WRJ**

**The meeting also was available remotely.**

**Attendance:** Committee Members John Haffner (Chair), Patrick Danaher (Vice-Chair), Alex Belensz, Dan Nott, and Ally Tufenkjian; Lori Hirshfield (staff); Heidi Duto (public), Joyce Perkins (public), and Michell Boleski (public)

As this was the Committee's first and organizational meeting, Lori Hirshfield, Director of the Hartford Department of Planning and Development, led the meeting until the Committee Chair was elected. The meeting came to order at 5:03 PM.

**1. Introductions**

Lori Hirshfield introduced herself and noted that this was the first and organizational meeting of the newly formed Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness appointed by the Hartford Selectboard. Lori added that the Committee is comprised of seven voting members including a Selectboard liaison member, and she will be providing staff assistance from the Department of Planning and Development as a non-voting member. She reviewed the agenda items and confirmed the Committee members received the Committee Charge, Constitution, Terms, Selection Process and Statutory Requirements as amended by the Selectboard on December 27, 2022 (attached). The Committee members and public then introduced themselves.

**2. 2023 Meeting Schedule**

The Committee agreed to meet monthly on Thursdays at 6:00 PM. Lori Hirshfield will review the availability of meeting space in Town Hall and distribute a proposed 2023 meeting schedule for vote at the March Committee meeting. She will aim to have the March meeting date correspond with the week of the proposed schedule.

**3. Nominations and Votes for Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary**

There was a brief discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary positions.

Jon Haffner stated his interest in being the Chair; no other members put forth a nomination. Ally Tufenkjian made a motion to approve John Haffner as the Chair, which was second by Dan Nott. All members voted in favor.

Patrick Danaher stated his interest in being the Vice-Chair; no other members put forth a nomination. Dan Nott made a motion to approve Patrick Danaher as the Vice-Chair, which was second by Ally Tufenkjian. All members voted in favor.

Alex Belenz stated his interest in being the Secretary; no other members put forth a nomination. John Haffner made a motion to approve Alex Belenz as the Secretary, which was second by Ally Tufenkjian. All members voted in favor.

#### **4. Committee Charge, Procedural Structure, Goals, and Work Program Discussion**

To kick-off the discussion, John Haffner read the seven-point Committee Charge and suggested the group go through the items one by one.

There was discussion about the importance of identifying, tracking and reporting metrics on housing stock, but not to get too focused on the collection, but rather identifying the general status to assist the Committee in addressing the issues. How the information is communicated also was identified as important.

Lori Hirshfield stated that at some point in the discussion she would like to give a brief overview of housing initiatives that the Planning Commission, staff and other regional groups are working on and how some of these overlap/complement the Committee on Housing and Homelessness' Charge. The group decided it would be helpful to have Lori proceed with this at the beginning of the discussion. She spoke about the:

- update of the Town Plan Housing Chapter now underway, and related data collection, and traditional and nontraditional community participation opportunities;
- staff starting to collect current information on multifamily apartment buildings – units/number of bedrooms, vacancies, rate of turnover, waiting list, and rental rates;
- current state legislation now being discussed in the House and Senate, and encouraging the Committee members to go to the VT League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) website and the State 2023 Legislative Session Bills website;
- May 6<sup>th</sup> regional Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) “How To” community informational event the Town is working on with Vital Communities and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC);
- Town’s rollout of a Hartford specific ADU outreach pilot project;
- regional “Keys to the Valley” report documenting existing conditions and proposals to address the housing needs in the Upper Valley; and
- recent changes to three Town Zoning Districts to add residential as a use, and more to come with a State grant to review all Town zoning districts now underway with TRORC and some other Vermont towns in the Upper Valley.

John Haffner asked the Committee members to talk about how their interests and/or experiences align with the Charge.

Alex Belenz expressed his interest and background as a planner with the Town Plan Housing Chapter Update, and development of more housing opportunities.

Michelle Boleski suggested the Committee members review the 2020 report from the Selectboard appointed Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness, if they had not already. She noted that the Ad Hoc Committee was comprised of town and regional people serving the unhoused population, and the report provided several recommendations to consider. It was agreed that a copy of the report would be circulated to the members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness. Michelle also advocated for homesharing for

older people, and researching “Livable Coop” an Upper Valley organization that focusses on development of ADUs.

There was a suggestion about setting up a Google docs page to share information. Lori clarified that as a Town appointed Committee this could be considered a quorum conducting business without notice to the public. There was additional discussion of State Open Meeting Law requirements. (Copies of the Law and FAQ’s will be provided to the Committee for discussion at the March meeting.)

Patrick Danaher expressed his interest in housing for the elderly such as homesharing.

Dan Nott felt his background in explaining policy in an accessible way could help with policy development at the state level.

John Haffner stated his job with Vital Communities supporting regional collaboration provides opportunities to see how other Towns can participate together in addressing housing.

Ally Tufenkjian spoke about important Selectboard topics such as the impact of climate immigration affecting housing availability and affordability, collaboration with other surrounding Towns in meeting all types of housing needs, broader community communication, and meeting the Town’s Acton Plan goals relative to housing.

Michelle Boleski suggested the Committee reach out to Pat Otillo who has developed a system for tracking data.

In summary, the Committee agreed to do the following by the next meeting in March.

- Review the Town’s Climate Acton Plan
- Review the 2020 report from the Selectboard’s Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness
- Identify people and organizations in the Upper Valley working on Housing issues.
- Review the *Keys to the Valley* report.
- Review House and Senate bills on housing.
- Review VT Open Meeting Law.

Members of the Committee or Lori will forward links or copies of the above referenced resource documents to the Committee.

In response to Heidi Duto’s question, it was confirmed that in addition to Open Meeting Law, the Committee generally follows Robert’s Rules of Order.

## **5. Adjournment**

Ally Tufenkjian made a motion to adjourn which was second by Dan Nott. The motion was approved unanimously.

Committee Members (Term exp.): John Haffner (12/12/2024), Patrick Danaher (11/28/2024), Alex Belensz (11/28/2024), Dan Nott (11/28/2024), and Ally Tufenkjian

## **Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness**

### **Charge:**

To support the increase of Hartford's affordable housing stock as well as Hartford residents' well-being and access to stable housing, with actions that might include the following:

1. Identifying, tracking and reporting metrics regarding housing stock in Hartford and the state of Hartford's unhoused, unsheltered and housing insecure communities.
2. Identifying regulatory obstacles within State and local legislation to the creation and occupation of affordable housing in Hartford.
3. Assessing strengths and gaps regarding Hartford's housing stock and local and regional services and opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.
4. Collecting mission statements and summaries of existing efforts of local and regional entities dedicated to addressing the region's housing crisis.
5. Creating an Affordable Housing Master Plan to identify current and potential future need for affordable housing including scenarios anticipating climate immigration and migration potentials (Climate Action Plan Section CE 2-2).
6. Supporting housing-related town planning and development initiatives such as updating the Town Plan Housing Chapter.
7. Supporting outreach and opportunities for regional collaboration between the Core 4 Towns to address housing and homelessness issues.

### **Constitution:**

This Committee will be constituted by no more than seven Hartford residents, including one Selectboard Member. Each of these members shall have equal weight in discussion and voting. The Committee shall also include up to one non voting member of town staff at the discretion of the Town Manager, for a total of eight members.

### **Terms:**

Committee members shall serve two-year terms beginning on the date of appointments, which may be renewed up to three times for a total of six years at the discretion of the Selectboard. This Committee shall be a standing committee and shall serve until discontinued by motion of the Selectboard.

**Selection Process:**

All vacancies, including those that result from an incomplete term, will be filled using the following process:

1. Members of the community interested in serving on the Committee shall apply to the Selectboard.
2. The Selectboard will ratify or reject by a vote each new appointment to the Committee.

**Statutory Requirements:**

As with all Hartford Committees, the Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness must operate in accordance with the Statutes of the State of Vermont and the Ordinances and Policies of the Town of Hartford. All meetings will be warned and open to the public and the minutes of these meetings will be recorded and posted in accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

Approvals:

Selectboard – Amendment, December 27, 2022

Selectboard – July 26, 2022