

Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting
Town Plan Housing Chapter Update
Approved Minutes
March 27, 2023

Planning Commission vice chair Bruce Riddle called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. He followed by reading the hybrid meeting script and conducting a roll call.

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 2 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Monday, March 27, 2023. The meeting was also available remotely and several people participated that way.

Planning Commission & Town Plan Steering Committee Members:

Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission
Toby Dayman	Planning Commission
John Heath	Planning Commission
Colin Butler	Planning Commission
Jesse Pollard	Energy Commission
John Haffner	Vital Communities
Andrew Winter	Twin Pines Housing Trust
PJ Skehan	Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce

Staff:

Lori Hirshfield	Director, Department of Planning and Development
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development
Kevin Geiger	Director of Planning, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
Kyle Katz	Planner, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

Others Present:

Alex Belenz
Lannie Collins
Heidi Duto
Cathy Melocik
John O'Neil

Minutes of the February 13th Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting:

Bruce asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of the February 13th meeting. Being none, Bruce asked for a motion to approve the minutes of 2/13/23. Colin Butler made a motion to approve the minutes of 2/13/23 as written. The motion was seconded by P.J. Skehan and approved.

Minutes of the February 28th Housing Community Discussion: Bruce asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of the February 28th Housing Community Discussion. Being none, Bruce asked for a motion to approve the minutes of 2/28/23. John Heath made a motion to approve the minutes of 2/28/23 Housing Community Discussion as written. The motion was seconded by Colin and approved.

Vermont Municipal Planning Grant Award: Matt Osborn reported that last week, staff was informed that the Town was awarded a Vermont Municipal Planning Grant to update the Economic Development Chapter of the Town Plan. Matt stated that work will begin on the update in the fall. Lori Hirshfield added that the current Town Plan Steering Committee will work with staff on the Economic Development Chapter update once the Housing Chapter update is completed.

Thoughts on the 2/28 Community Discussion on Housing: Matt asked the Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee if they had any thoughts about the 2/28 community discussion on housing including the breakout sessions. P.J. Skehan stated that the Zoom format worked well, attendees were engaged, and the facilitators stayed on task and on-time. Colin Butler agreed. He added that in the future, we need to take into consideration those with vision or color-blindness issues when developing presentation slides. John Heath thought the meeting worked well. Jesse Pollard stated that the event was well-publicized.

Bruce commented that people are desperate for guidance on what to do with their homes. He noted that there are energy retrofitting funds available and we need to get the word out to the public. Jesse responded that the Energy Commission is trying to do that. For example, the Energy Commission is working with other Upper Valley energy commissions to sponsor Energize Upper Valley on Saturday, April 1st at the Listen Center and Town Hall. Lori reported that an accessory dwelling unit event is scheduled for Saturday, May 6th at the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center.

Public Outreach: Matt reported that the Housing Chapter logo to go along with the community outreach of “Homes for Hartford” was completed last week and is up on the Town website. Staff worked with a Center for Cartoon Studies student on developing the logo. Matt also noted that staff is working with Junction Arts and Media on the multimedia booth to reach out to the community about the project.

Community Meeting Format: Lori stated that the second community meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 13th at the Bugbee Senior Center focused on Goals and Strategies for the Housing Chapter. She noted that the in-person meeting will start with a participatory exercise for people to write responses to a couple housing questions on large sheets of paper. The exercise will follow with a brief introduction and overview of the Plan update and then breakout sessions. She requested that the Steering Committee members to spread out amongst the breakout sessions to enhance the discussion. . Lori explained that goals are overarching and what we want to see in the future. Strategies are the things we need in place to achieve the goals. Actions are the to-do list. Lori noted that during the 2019 Town Plan community forums, housing goals, strategies and actions were developed which are still relevant today. The following are the housing goals from the 2019 forums:

Goal 1: Develop diverse, quality, affordable housing for all.

Goal 2: Develop complete neighborhoods with traditional development patterns.

In preparation for the Community meeting, Lori asked the group to brainstorm about housing goals and strategies. The following are the responses.

Housing Goals:

1. Housing Density
 - o Quantity
2. Housing Diversity

- Do we have the right sizes and types?
- 3. Housing Affordability
 - Cost
 - Can people stay here?
- 4. Housing Volume
 - Resources/Incentives
 - Ex: Housing Authority; housing development fund
- 5. Housing Quality & Compatibility
 - Design & massing to fit in a neighborhood.

Overarching Questions:

1. How do we integrate new housing into existing neighborhoods?
 - a. Good design.
 - b. What does Hartford want to regulate?
 - c. Intergenerational transfer of knowledge, sharing & community building
2. How do we incentivize good design?
3. How do we get to a shared ownership and shared vision?
 - a. Advantages to all
4. How do we get developers involved in the solutions?
 - a. Development that targets income levels in the middle & lower incomes, not just high end
5. What are some impediments to developing new housing?
 - a. Smoother application process
6. How to preserve the current housing stock we have?
 - a. Affordability/funding
 - b. Property tax breaks
7. Are there places in town where we do not want to encourage housing?
8. Where do we want to encourage housing?
 - a. Where do we need to expand existing water ,sewer and roads to gain more housing?
9. Identify areas where there are limitations on housing development by state/region.
10. What is the role of Town in improving streetscape and creating a sense of neighborhood?

Goals to facilitate increased Housing productions:

1. Taxation vs fee based
 - a. Spreading around property tax burden, eg. water & wastewater upgrades, expansions
2. Mixed use
3. Are people living in good conditions?

Lori thanked the group for participating in the discussion.

Next Steering Committee Meeting: Lori Hirshfield stated that staff will send out an email about a date for the next meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:57. p.m.