

**Minutes
Hartford Planning Commission
Public Hearing
Sketch Plan
March 29, 2021**

Attendance

Planning Commissioners: Bruce Riddle, John Reid, Robin Adair Logan, Toby Dayman, Dave Sherman, Dillon Bianchi, and John Heath

Staff: Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield, and Zoning Administrator Jo-Ann Ells

Members of the Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Emergency Shelter: Simon Dennis and Jon Chaffee

Bruce Riddle called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and read the Act 92 open meeting script.

Jo-Ann Ells stated that the purpose of the meeting was to have an informal, non-binding discussion with two members of the Hartford Ad Hoc Committee on Emergency Shelter (the Committee) regarding the development of micro dwellings as a Planned Development. She noted that materials regarding the project had been emailed to the Planning Commission prior to the meeting.

Discussion

Simon Dennis noted that the Committee did not have a specific location to discuss and that they are in the feasibility stage. He noted that there have been discussions with the Fire Marshal and the State Permit Specialist regarding the project.

Simon explained that there has been recognition that a camping community of approximately 10-20 +/- people exists in town. He noted when the hotel voucher systems ends, it is estimated that 30-40 people will need housing.

Simon explained that many Vermont communities recognize the need for additional housing and a successful micro-dwelling project could be a model that could be followed on a regional level.

Bruce asked how any units would be created. Simon estimated 9+/-.

John Reid asked for a description of ownership and management. Simon stated that the project will likely be managed by a non-profit group. He noted that he has had discussion about the project with several non-profits including The Haven and Twin Pines Housing,

It was noted that the project does not fit into a use in the Zoning Regulations and therefore would be applied for as a Planned Development. Jo-Ann noted that this is how The Haven was permitted. Simon added that he believes the State will categorize the project as a campground.

Dave Sherman asked about maintenance and security.

Simon explained that support systems will be in place for the residents and management/oversight and insurance will come from various agencies. He added that an advisory board will likely be created.

Jon Chaffee noted that the system is popular in other parts of the country, typically on a much larger scale, and the Committee is looking at existing models to follow.

John Heath asked why people would not be housed through the traditional system.

Simon noted that the housing inventory is low and some of the camping population have a strong preference not to enter an institutional setting.

John H. asked about the process for vetting residents. Simon stated that he envisioned a certain number of beds for people with different needs and that intake criteria is being worked on by the Committee.

John H. asked what type of support the Committee is looking for from the Town. Simon stated that there is already a good relationship between the Police Department and the camping community and that he hoped this relationship would continue. Jon added that the Committee is not expecting financial support from the Town. Simon clarified that non-profits working with the Committee might seek financial support from the town which is typical of other non-profits.

Simon noted that the Committee is looking to work with the Center for Transformational Practice.

Jo-Ann suggested that members of the Committee meet with the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment when a potential site is found.

Toby Dayman asked if the Committee was planning on developing multiple locations. Simon stated that the Committee wanted to test a single location and hopes it will be a successful model for other towns to follow.

Toby asked why a 5-acre site, (as noted in the prepare materials) was important. Simon stated that less acreage might work but that privacy was important.

It was noted that the development was intended to provide transitional housing. How long someone would live there would depend on the availability of housing as well as other factors relative to the individual.

Robin Adair Logan noted that the intention was good, but she would need more specifics to comment.

Robin Adair stated she would be interested in receiving links to similar projects. Jon and Jo-Ann agreed to coordinate this.

Bruce noted that maintenance of the development will be important in addition to standard site plan issues.

Simon noted that the project might include an area for tents. Dave suggested considering tent platforms.

There was a brief discussion regarding the need for sprinkler systems. Jo-Ann offered to follow up with the Fire Department and Simon.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6PM.