

Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness – **DRAFT Minutes**

June 15, 2023 6:00 PM
Hartford, VT Town Hall, Room 2

Attendance

In-Person: John Haffner (Chair), Patrick Danaher (Vice Chair), Dan Nott, Jennifer Kravitz, Ally Tufenkjian (Selectboard Liaison)

Members of the Public: Marie Alvin, Dan Towle

Staff: Lori Hirshfield

1. Call Meeting to Order

John Haffner called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. Lori Hirshfield then relayed information about the in-person and remote hybrid format for the meeting.

2. Review Order of Agenda

John Haffner asked if any changes to the meeting agenda. There was discussion about when public comment would occur generally and related to meeting agenda items. Lori Hirshfield and Ally Tufenkjian provided information on Vermont's Open Meeting Law and guidance from VLCT. The Committee concluded to have public comment on general non agenda items following review of the meeting agenda order, and at the end of each agenda item for that particular item.

3. Public Comment

Marie Alvin inquired when the Housing Committee became the Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness. Following a brief discussion, it was clarified that the Planning Commission's Ad Hoc Committee on Housing to the update the Housing chapter is a separate process from the Committee on Housing and Homelessness, and there is coordination between the two.

4. Approve May 18, 2023 Committee Meeting Minutes

Jennifer Kravitz made a motion to approve the Minutes and Dan Nott second the motion. The Minutes were approved unanimously.

5. Update on Town Plan Housing Chapter Ad Hoc Steering Committee (Subcommittee of the Planning Commission)

Lori Hirshfield reported that the Planning Commission and Committee have meet to begin drafting possible goals, strategies and actions as a follow-up from the community meeting and those in the current Town Plan. She added that the Commission/committee will be working over the summer to develop these further for community discussion in early September. The next meeting of the Commission/committee will be on June 29th.

6. Report on Vital Communities June 2, 2023 Housing Breakfast

John Haffner reported that it was a very informative event with panelist discussing accessory dwelling units, building small developments of multifamily housing, and preserving existing

affordable housing. There was discussion on the lack of housing impacting people's ability to stay in or relocate to the area.

7. Planning for Table at Hartford Community Coalition Block Party June 21, 2023

Plans for the Committee's table for the Block Party were discussed. John, Jen, Ally and Dan will be there for set-up and staffing table. Also discussed was information to have at the table to stimulate conversations and minimize handouts. Marie Alvin added that she supported mixed income housing and suggested that any new housing developments be required to dedicate a certain percentage for individuals that are low income or homeless.

8. State *Homes for All* Pilot Project – Hartford Submittal to be Case Study

John Haffner introduced this new state initiative to develop a Toolkit for small scale home builders, investors and community leaders with the focus on "gentle infill" as a "strategy to address Vermont's Housing and affordability crisis." Lori Hirshfield referenced the information attached to the published agenda. The Toolkit includes guidance on local and regional regulations, financing, infrastructure and design. Lori added that the state is seeking five communities to be case studies to test the Toolkit; the applications are brief and due June 23, 2023. Following a discussion about the application process, the Committee members recommended staff continue conversations with the Acting Town Manager about submitting an application. It was not clear if the Selectboard needed to approve an application submittal, and Lori would clarify with the Acting Town Manager.

9. Follow-up on May Discussion of Changes in Vermont's Hotel Motel Voucher Program and Local and Regional Responses

The Committee discussed all the changes that had occurred in the past week related to the State Offices and Legislature. Don Towle, who is very involved in collecting data, noted that about half the number of people expected to be without housing once the hotel housing voucher program ended, have found some form of housing or moved out of the area. More will be known over the next couple of weeks from the state offices and legislature veto session regarding options to assist.

10. Hartford Letter of Interest to State on Resources and Support for 2023 Homeless Response Efforts – Discussion of Hartford's immediate funding or resource needs.

Ally Tufenkjian stated that the Selectboard voted at its May 30th meeting to send a letter of interest to participant in the State's Resources and Support for Vermonters Experiencing Homelessness, which the Acting Town Manager did on May 31st. Reference was made to Attachments for Item # 9 on the HCHH's meeting agenda. Ally added that many of the tasks listed in the Vermont Department of Children and Families Memo (to Municipalities, service providers, etc.) are not within the capacity of the Town and would be done by other service providers. Marie Alvin said working with the City of Lebanon for support services is a good idea, and that she also supports the conversion of the former 25,000 Gifts building into a shelter.

Lori noted the seven items on page 2 of the state's memo that the state is interested in funding. She added that the Acting Town Manager thought it would be helpful for the HCHH to identify which of these could be the focus of the application for Selectboard consideration if invited to submit an application. The Committee discussed various service providers in the area that match up with these seven items. It was unclear to the Committee members if these organizations would be

applying for the grants directly. The Committee members decided to reach out to some of these groups to inquire about the services they currently provide to the State's target populations, and if they are aware of the grant opportunity. Some groups identified were Dartmouth Health Services, Haven, Listen, Visiting Nurses and Hospice, Good Neighbor Health and Dental Clinics, SEVCA, Dismiss, and Restorative Justice. The Committee agreed on the draft language for the outreach which Don would finalize and send to the Committee members.

It was agreed that the Town is not making any suggestions about partnering with any specific providers. There also was discussion if the grant would allow the Town to work with NH organizations that provide services to Hartford folks. Lori would inquire.

11. Identify HCHH Member to Work With Planning and Development Department for Review of Housing Development Applications

There was discussion about the Department's review process with other Town commissions/committees for applications requiring review by the Planning Commission and/or Zoning Board of Adjustment. Lori Hirshfield explained that most often this would be within the first week following the application deadline which occurs approximately every 5 weeks. She added that there likely would not be housing related applications each cycle. She noted that the schedule is set just prior to the beginning of each calendar year. Lori also stated that there are times when an applicant has an informal discussion with the Planning Commission and/or Zoning Board of Adjustment known as Sketch Plan Review, which may generate review earlier. Jennifer Kravitz volunteered to be the primary representative and Patrick Danaher volunteered as the secondary representative. The other members thanked them.

12. Follow-up on HCHH Workplan for 2023

Members agreed at previous meetings to conduct interviews with other Town housing related groups to learn more about what they are doing, and their experiences. Alley Tufenkjian reported that she completed her interview with the Housing First group in Lebanon. Jennifer said she will be conducting her interview in the following week.

13. News from Committee Members

Dan Towle stated information about the City of Lebanon moving forward with the Upper Valley Homelessness Assessment.

14. Adjourn Meeting

Ally Tufenkjian made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Jennifer Kravitz. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting ended at 8:25 PM.