

**Affordable Housing Commission – Monthly Meeting
Final Minutes**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.

Charlestown Town Hall, Annex Conference Room, 4540 South County Trail, Charlestown, Rhode Island

1. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Evelyn Smith called in to report that she was delayed by a car on her road stuck in a snow bank. She said she would be on her way shortly and that Vice Chairman Sean White could begin and open the meeting with the discussion on Agenda 7 (a). Vice Chairman Sean White called the meeting to order.

2. ROLL CALL. Vice Chairman, Sean White; Secretary, Sandra Puchalski; AHC members Ernest Morreira and Brian McDonald. Town Council liaison Tom Gentz. Member Faith LaBossiere was excused. Chairman Evelyn Smith was expected to arrive later. Nancy Letendre, Land Use Attorney for Mason & Associates, Consulting firm for Town of Charlestown Comprehensive Plan was in attendance.

3. MINUTES. Members agreed to delay approval of minutes until Chair arrives.

4. COMMUNICATIONS. Members agreed to delay Communications report until Chair arrives.

5. STAFF REPORTS on current Affordable Housing issues. Members agreed to delay any Staff reports until Chair arrives.

6. REPORT, TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON. Members agreed to delay Town Council report until Chair arrived.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

a) Charlestown Comprehensive Plan. Discussion of Housing and Demographics Element (2013 Draft 4) of the 2013 Charlestown Comprehensive Plan Update in consideration of current Comprehensive Plan Revision.

Nancy Letendre was present and began with an overview of the Housing and Demographic Elements of the Draft plan. Ms. Letendre explained that they are doing the re-write for a 20 year plan and it will be in effect to 2035. She further explained that what is important for our Town is to establish our Policy Statement and Goals and to establish what is important and relevant to our community. She discussed that Charlestown is unique and has a persuasive argument because of its natural resources, tourism economy and geological constraints that are necessary to protect our valuable natural resources. She explained that housing in our community therefore would be unique as well and that we can come up with needs based choices for our community.

She explained RI Housing requires us to look at the Census 2010 data. Chaz-data. This is standardized information for Rhode Island and nearby Connecticut. It is not specific to southern Rhode Island. She noted George Tremblay's report as a resource. She noted that the firm is required to look at Housing conditions, housings costs, cost of land and costs associated with private wells and septic, etc. Housing in Charlestown is very different because of these associated costs that other communities do not have. Ernest commented on the constraints to development and how they add costs to housing, and also commented on Rhode Map RI. He added, data also indicates that Charlestown may not be as affluent as some perceive it to be. Chairman Evelyn Smith arrived at this time.

Ms. Letendre explained we need a "definition of Charlestown." Tom spoke of the necessity of having a "needs based" definition for our community. Tom also mentioned the reduction in FEMA Flood rates for our town at 15% . Evelyn welcomed Ms. Letendre to the meeting and discussed the obstacles to affordable housing development in regards to our current zoning. Nancy wanted to know if AHC has had discussions on Policy Statement. Evelyn reported we have not had in-depth conversations about it. We have had round table discussions however, and can commit that to a document. Discussion continued on constraints within zoning such as; no provision for multi-family dwellings that are feasible, the need for rental housing and that members of community are forced out of town to fill this void. The striking difference between the property values south of Route 1 and north of Rt. 1. AHC members discussed the need for an Affordable Homes Program and the need for a Town of Charlestown Subsidy Ordinance. The Affordable Homes Program could be modeled on voluntary enrollment, an opt-in type of model. AHC members discussed the Land Trust Model to minimize the land cost which is a constraint.

Ms. Letendre discussed the importance of 30 year restriction and monitoring agency and compliance. These have to be thought out and planned as not to invite lawsuits in the end. There are fiscal concerns as well. She mentioned a very good relationship with Washington County Community Development Corp and to continue this relationship as we develop our models further. Regional collaborative was suggested to foster a project for Washington County.

Mixed –use zoning was discussed as positive and village oriented businesses to support it. Higher density along the commercial zoning areas in town could work well. Ms. Letendre mentioned you can look into sites in or near the growth centers, and those potential sites may be earmarked in the Comprehensive Plan as having a good potential for affordable housing development. The AHC can identify some of these parcels within our town for discussion as potential sites of interest. Members discussed PDD zones for Planned Development Districts to be identified. In other words, we can paint with a broad brush and see what sites or areas are suited for development. AHC members discussed Senior Housing and apartment – multi-family-group home communities. These would be considered “land development projects.” Nancy wanted us to bring those policies and decisions to her attention so that she can evaluate it and help us to reach our goals for the community. She explained that she is used to drafting legislation and has been involved in litigation. It is best to have a collective plan. Many litigations are involved with an interpretation of the plan and its different chapters. She suggested that the new plan needs to have the chapters relate to each other and be a collective plan for the community this time around. It needs to include economic development, etc. as they relate to each other.

b) Municipal Subsidy Ordinance. Evelyn asked Nancy if she had time to look at the Draft for the Municipal Government Subsidy Program for Low and Moderate Income Housing. Nancy said she did and Evelyn explained that Jane Weidman our Town Planner had asked us to review it with the consultant. Members received copies of the draft dated February 26 , 2015. (Second Draft) AHC members reviewed this with consultant. The draft copy will add Chapter 181 Municipal subsidies for Low and Moderate Income Housing. Members discussed the need for this ordinance to offer no new density bonus subsidy unless it is already defined in the Zoning ordinance and the need for the subsidy ordinance to provide for an application process, compliance requirements, and enforcement provisions. A key question to be answered is when the restriction is to be recorded. Discussion ensued regarding whether it should be addressed before the issuance of the building permit or the Certificate of Occupancy. (CO).

Sandra noted time. Motion made by Sandra to extend to 9:00. Ernest seconded. All voted in favor of motion. Motion carried.

Members added comment on different sections of the draft and had some good points for discussion regarding the draft. All in all it seemed to be a good start. Ms. Letendre left at this time.

3. Minutes. Evelyn passed out the copy of January 22, 2015 draft minutes that were delayed at beginning of meeting. Members reviewed minutes and with no additions or deletions, Ernest made a motion to accept minutes as presented. Sean seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a) Income-Restricted Accessory Dwelling Units. Continued to March, further discussion of zoning and tax ordinance needs, mortgage impact, deed restriction and related issues.

b) Commissioners’ Liaison Reports. Review of Commission liaison assignments. Continued.

c) Special Projects List/Commission Assignments and progress reports not requiring Commission action. Any Commissioner may propose or volunteer for independent research topics, data or document compilations, or draft documents that advance the work being undertaken by the Commission. Any Commissioner may volunteer to undertake any special project not already assigned. Continued.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT. None .

10. NEXT MEETING. The next regular monthly meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2015, at 7:00 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT. Motion made and seconded to adjourn at approx.. 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra K. Puchalski, Secretary,

Approved as revised at the March 19, 2015, meeting of the Affordable Housing Commission.