

FINAL MINUTES
Affordable Housing Commission – Monthly Meeting
THURSDAY, April 17, 2014 – 7:00 P.M.

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

1. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Smith called meeting to order, noting five out of five voting members for a quorum.

2. ROLL CALL. Evelyn Smith, Sandra Puchalski, Ernest Morreira, Faith LaBossiere and Sean White Town Council member George Tremblay was also present.

3. MINUTES. Approval of minutes: March 20, 2014. Draft minutes were emailed to everyone and Evelyn had printed copies. Motion made by Ernest to delete last sentence in 7b. Sean seconded. Faith abstained because she was not present. Sean moved to accept minutes as presented with deletion noted. Ernest seconded. Motion carried.

4. COMMUNICATIONS. Communications Report. Evelyn passed out the communications report for members to review regarding communications and documents received since March 20, 2014, meeting, noting that Ernest is keeping us informed on current news stories, including a Providence Journal story on the reorganization of RI Housing Board. Evelyn noted 2 additional documents (k) and (l) from Town Council President Tom Gentz relative to the work of the Oversight Committee, which would be added to the Communications Report, which is attached to and made part of the minutes and record. Members went over these and other documents. Faith noted she has a new email address. Evelyn noted that item (h) would go out after the meeting. Members wanted to have a printed copy of the report in color. Evelyn had requested that from Planning and will follow up. She will also email a digital file. The Housing Survey is very important to our work. George noted that he had attended the recent meeting of the Legislative Oversight Committee and was taken back that fewer than 50% of the municipalities had responded to the League of Cities and Towns Survey. He noted the report was a collection of opinions based on who filled out the form and not a fact-based analysis. Ernest asked if there was a written charge for this Oversight Committee or is it just a pro-forma proceeding. They do have to report back to the General Assembly.

5. STAFF REPORTS on current Affordable Housing issues. No staff reports.

6. REPORT, TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON. Tom was not present and Evelyn reported that the Town Council authorized the Disaster Relief CDBD grant application. Geoff's application for Churchwoods, which is almost \$6M, went in as a part of this. Tom told the Council that there was a good chance that the CDBG grant would be funded. The grant is good for the State and good for housing.

The Council also voted to amend the existing CDBG housing assistance program and allow the replacement of substandard trailers when needed. The mobile home will be countable as a Low-Mod unit because there will be a lien on the trailer for 30 years, held by the Town of Charlestown, secured by the unit under the UCC (Uniform Commercial Code). It was noted that this creates another program that will need to be monitored by a monitoring agency or it can fail. George noted that some of the managers are difficult to communicate with and get responses from. It was suggested that the Oversight Commission needs to take some role in deed restrictions to survive foreclosure.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

a) Legislative Oversight Commission. Discussion of draft bullet list for presentation to the legislative commission. Evelyn passed out Tom's bullet points, George's bullet points and Evelyn's draft of points to be covered in her testimony. Evelyn noted that Tom's input as a member of the commission will be submitted when non-commission testimony was complete. April 9th was original date for affordable housing commissions to give testimony, but that was cancelled, at present there is not another date scheduled. Evelyn will present her testimony when the meeting is rescheduled.

Members revisited Tom's list, which was reported and gone over at last meeting, and George's list, which was formulated in response to that discussion:

TOM:

- Maximum Eligibility: 80% AMI
- Meets approved land use plans
- Addresses local needs
- Rehab trumps new
- Rental trumps ownership
- Count all affordable units

GEORGE:

TO HELP THE MOST DISTRESSED:

- Reduce eligibility below 80%
- Prefer rental projects over home ownership
- Prefer multi-family rehab projects over new construction

TO GAIN MUNICIPAL SUPPORT:

- Identify local needs
- Account for existing affordability outside of LMIH housing
- Meet approved land use plans

In discussion, Evelyn thought "count all affordable units" is too inflammatory and too easily dismissed. Her thoughts were that "count" and "all units" should not be used in same sentence. After discussion, "Acknowledge all existing affordable units" was the phrase most acceptable for bullet point. George noted that he formulated his list based on discussions with Evelyn and Tom and focused on helping the most distressed and to gain municipal support. Ernest thought we should take out "prefer," in that it is inclusive. Members questioned the term "multi-family." George intended duplexes to perhaps 4-unit projects. It was agreed that we "prefer rehabilitation and repurposing over new construction." It was agreed that talking points in support of the bullet points should be short paragraphs.

Members discussed Evelyn's draft main points:

- STOP just counting units. ASSESS NEED. PLAN. COMMIT.
- Recognize and meet CURRENT NEED. Don't let longevity considerations get in the way.
- Develop NEW TOOLS to make affordable rental housing financially feasible, and attractive to private investors.
- Make STATE and FEDERAL funding allocations diverse and geographically equitable.

Members noted that "PLAN" should take into consideration the unique character of each municipality. Ernest suggested that "COMMIT" be replaced by "IMPLEMENT. EVALUATE. REVISE." Members discussed "need." Faith wanted to know about social services and if they can provide us with that local information. George noted the information we have is based on demand and need is virtually impossible to assess. Ernest thought planning should flow from local need with the legitimacy of reliable resources. The State must invest in local-specific needs assessments to implement the state housing plan.

Sandra made note of time and made motion to extend time for 15 minutes. Faith seconded. All voted in favor of motion.

Members continued on next point of longevity and development of Land Trust model. Land trust is forever. Discussion on rental land trust and discussions finished up 7a on agenda.

Sandra again noted time. Sean made motion to extend 15 minutes till 9:00. Faith seconded. Motion carried.

b) State Housing Study. The planning study was not able to be printed for the meeting. Evelyn noted that the state's assessment of future housing needs would be critical in helping us to assess future housing needs for Charlestown. Ernest brought up the need to have funding to get local specific needs assessment. It was noted that each municipality is expected to do its share, but there are no tools at all. Sean stressed that local needs assessment has to address capacity. We have a large percentage of open space and our build out potential is limited. Even with affordable housing, there is a segment of the population that cannot live here, due to the shortage of jobs and transportation. Members hoped that the promised housing study would be a good starting point.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a) Commissioner's Liaison Reports. Continued to next meeting.

e) Commission Goals - continued to next meeting

f) Special Projects List/Commission Assignments. Continued to next meeting. Any Commissioner may volunteer to undertake any special project not already assigned.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT- none.

10. NEXT MEETING. The next regular monthly meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2014, at 7:00 p.m..

11. ADJOURNMENT. Motion made by Ernest and seconded by Sandra to adjourn. Motion carried.

Attached: Communications Report April 17, 2014

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Puchalski, Recording Secretary.

Minutes approved as amended, at the May 15, 2014, meeting of the Affordable Housing Commission.

