

**FINAL MINUTES**  
**AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION – MONTHLY MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.**

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER.** Meeting called to order at 7:12 pm by Chairman Smith

**2. ROLL CALL.** Members present: Chairman, Evelyn Smith, Secretary, Sandra Karasuk Puchalski, Ernest Morreira and Faith LaBossiere, Town of Charlestown Town Liaison, Tom Gentz. Excused Vice Chair, Sean White and AHC member Brian McDonald.

**3. MINUTES.** Approval of Minutes May 28, 2015. Copies of draft minutes were passed out. AHC members review draft minutes. Motion made by Ernest and seconded by Faith to accept minutes as presented. Ernest noted they were beautifully detailed. Motion carried.

**4. COMMUNICATIONS.** Communications Report. There was no communication report.

**5. STAFF REPORTS.** There were no staff reports.

**6. REPORT. TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON.** Tom reported that he had checked with Charlestown Police about citizens living in woods. There are no reports of citizens living in woods. Tom called the Principal of the Charlestown Elementary School to inquire on households looking for housing. There was a report of one household from the Principal of the Elementary School. Tom noted that the trailers are in place and unfortunately one of the households had a death in the family. He had passed away while in temporary housing. Tom noted that there was a press release on June 16<sup>th</sup> and that the Providence Journal also reported on the units as well. Tom noted that the ChurchWoods property acquisition is to close by the end of the month. The project will still have to go to Planning Commission for Preliminary/Final approval. Faith wanted to note that the minutes need to be updated on the website. Evelyn noted that they are being updated with amendments, etc. and will be updated shortly. Faith inquired if there was any update on the Narragansett Tribe affordable housing on Kings Factory Road. Tom responded that there is interest and the Federal Government is interested in the project status.

**7. NEW BUSINESS.** None

**8. OLD BUSINESS.**

**a). ChurchWoods Senior Housing.** Tom noted update earlier in evening on this.

**b). Charlestown Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Subsidy Ordinance.** Evelyn passed out the latest draft documents that have been worked on and noted that the red is what we have talked about and has become our working draft. We can add to this as necessary depending on our discussions tonight. The blue ink on the document is in blue because we had talked about it for the first time at last meeting and we can review that again. Ernest noted that the consultants will take our ideas and then hammer them out. He noted this is not our declaration but it is our half of the conversation. Evelyn discussed the process of composing a cover letter and then attaching our Affordable Housing Draft Comments and sending off to the Planning Commission. Ernest noted we should be mindful of our local needs and that is our challenge. AHC members discussed the need to reach out to the Warm Shelter and Crisis center and RICAN as they are on the front line of housing needs and can contribute. Faith noted we should be able to determine for ourselves the need in the community and noted we need year around rentals. Faith noted that there are other properties like the Ocean Aire Motel that the State of RI just purchased for Water Protection that could be a possibility for our housing needs. Discussion on a rental subsidy program and the pro's and con's of a program like that. Tom noted he has a hard time with a rental subsidy because once it is used it is gone and you have no more. It goes a lot faster. Deed restrictions were discussed and perhaps there could be a subsidy or tax credit for the homeowner or landowner to voluntarily submit the property into the program. There would be a tax credit and it would be voluntary. Evelyn noted that she can put together a cover letter for the Planning Commission

with our draft comments and include a glossary of terms. Discussion on the land trust and how creation of this could be used for homeowners and landowner to donate land to the trust and get a tax credit. Tom spoke of the 9% tax credit subsidy program. He noted that the concept is sustainable and in his opinion works much better than a rental subsidy. Faith thought we could talk about Policy. Evelyn noted we had agreed not to talk about the Policy. Ernest wanted to see the other elements as they are in draft form like our Housing drafts. Tom noted that each element of the Comp Plan has draft documents and that would be possible for review. Upon further discussion, Sandra made motion for the Chair to prepare the cover letter to Planning Commission with Glossary of terms and the Affordable HOMES Proposal Draft and include a reference to George Tremblay's report. Faith seconded. All voted in favor of motion. Evelyn noted she will prepare for Planning.

Further discussion of the Municipal Subsidy Ordinance was continued to the next meeting.

**c) Income – Restricted Accessory Dwelling Units.** Continued to the next meeting.

**d) Special Projects List/Commission Assignments** – none reported.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENT.** Faith announced that she will be stepping down. She had prepared a resignation letter. The Chair will forward her letter to the Town Clerk. All thanked Faith for her service to the AHC. Sandra noted meetings in Narragansett on an Affordable Housing Development and offered the documents for review for the AHC members.

**10. NEXT MEETING.** The next regular monthly meeting is scheduled for July 16, 2015 at 7:00 p.m..

**11. ADJOURNMENT.** Meeting adjourned at approx.. 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandra Karasuk Puchalski, Recording Secretary

**Attachments:**

2015 AH Strategy Review Comments (6/18/2015 draft)

Approved at the September 1, 2015, meeting of the Affordable Housing Commission.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION: COMMENTS**

2013 Comprehensive Plan Draft Update: HOUSING POLICIES (Ref. p. 12-18)

(Note: glossary of abbreviations and acronyms follows.)

Policy	This works	This does not work	Comments
<b>Policy 1: Help residents of low income to be able to stay in their homes.</b>			
<b>Policy 2: Encourage a mix of dwelling unit types and price ranges in new residential development.</b>			
<b>Policy 3: Meet the state requirement of assuring that ten percent of housing units are affordable for people of low and moderate income. See the affordable housing strategy review section for more detail on each of these.</b>			Note: “people” is not the appropriate term – use “households”
<b>Policy 4: Use analysis, incentives, negotiation, and zoning amendments to meet as many housing needs as possible through private and non-profit development.</b>			
<b>Policy 5: Improve streetscapes in villages to revitalize and strengthen neighborhoods.</b>			
<b>Policy 6: Encourage residential and mixed use development in Growth Centers in accordance with the State Guide Plan Element <i>Land Use 2025</i>.</b>			
<i>Policy 7: Utilize regional efforts to meet housing needs.</i>			
<b>Policy 8: Meet with the Narragansett Indian Tribe Council to discuss progress in implementing the Town’s housing program and the Narragansett’s housing program for Tribal members who live in Charlestown.</b>			Note: need to consult with Town Solicitor to review tribal position on this matter

**Policy 9: Continue to promote housing that protects the Town's natural and cultural resources and rural character, and reflects the natural constraints of the land.**

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Strategy	Status & Conclusions: Comments	Recommendations
<b>Strategy 1: Adopting a Land Trust Model</b>	Include mention of successful partnership with SCH4H and Church CH at Edwards Lane, utilizing their existing land trusts with modifications to protect Town’s financial investment.	Continue to partner with existing land trusts. Encourage the creation of an AH land trust designed to promote private investment in LIH rental units (perhaps on a regional or statewide basis.)
<b>Strategy 2: Adopt Inclusionary Zoning</b>	Design to maintain LMIH unit levels when new housing units are proposed. Most recent draft proposed 15% for major subdivisions only. This does not take minor subdivisions into consideration.	Consider mandatory inclusionary zoning for all subdivisions and land development projects, at minimum of 10% of new units, with pro-rated fee-in-lieu going to dedicated Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
<b>Strategy 3: Pursue proactive new construction through an affordable housing overlay district and/or amend mixed-use zoning</b>	Zoning amendment has not resulted in any new AH units as yet. Repurposing existing housing units (houses, cottages, motels) may be more feasible, but does not comply with current mixed-use zoning requirements.	AH should be a key part of the strategic plan for all Growth Centers. Overlay/mixed-use regs need to be revitalized, perhaps by defining mixed-use by strategic combination of commercial and residential, and not only on a lot-by-lot basis. For example, Churchwoods project deviates from current zoning, but is a good fit.
<b>Strategy 4: Implement a Developer Request for Proposal (RFP) Process</b>	The AH Bond Procedures accomplished this. Reference to the PDD: note that one of the 2 PDD zones has been converted to Open Space, the other is an active gravel bank. PDD needs to be re-examined.	Continue RFP- see strategy 9. Perhaps PDD can be redefined as part of growth center strategic planning, in the form of mixed-use development projects.
<b>Strategy 5: Accessory Apartments</b>	Zoning amendment has produced no successful application to date.	Zoning ordinance and tax relief ordinance need work. Look into relaxation of the 30-year restriction (ref. Barnstable, MA)

<p><b>Strategy 6: Adaptive Re-Use/Location Specific Projects</b></p>	<p>Success with Churchwoods, Shannock Village Cottages, Edwards Land, and CDBG trailer replacement programs</p>	<p>Redefine types of adaptive re-use rather than site specific projects other than those in progress (Churchwoods and Shannock Village Cottages.)</p>
<p><b>Strategy 7: Pursue Regional Strategies</b></p>	<p>WCRPC has been supportive. WCCDC is a key partner. Regional forums help to increase community awareness and participation. Regional supportive programs (homeless, food banks, etc.) inform the housing need and help to stabilize the low-income households in need of housing.</p>	<p>Need for continued regional programs for education and information, to encourage year-round AH rentals with countable subsidies, and to stabilize low-income households with supportive services. Need for regional strategies to counteract summer displacement of families in winter rentals.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 8: Employ Creatively Structured Subsidies for both Homeownership and Rental Opportunities</b></p>	<p>The limited application of this strategy to trailer parks is not productive. CDBG funding for replacement of trailers in existing parks is more limited but also more successful.</p>	<p>Consider a voluntary enrollment program for suitable existing housing units, with tax/rent subsidies as incentives. Make the case to the state for counting actual or historical average enrollment. (Ex. Affordable H.O.M.E.S. proposal.)</p>
<p><b>Strategy 9. Establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund</b></p>	<p>The availability of local Bond funding has made Charlestown attractive to affordable housing developers. A permanent Affordable Housing Trust Fund would continue to make small financial subsidies available while not precluding additional bond issues.</p>	<p>Establishment would need to include the identification of funding streams and policies setting forth the acceptable uses, as was done for the bond issue.</p>