

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

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 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 7:15 p.m. by Chairman Evelyn Smith.

**2. ROLL CALL.** Chairman, Evelyn Smith; Sean White, Vice Chairman; Sandra Puchalski, Secretary; members, Brian McDonald and Ernest Morreira. Member Faith LaBossiere is excused. Town Council Liaison Tom Gentz was absent, due to a conflict.

**3. MINUTES.** Approval of minutes: December 18, 2014. Draft minutes were passed out as prepared by Secretary. After review, motion made by Ernest and seconded by Sean to approve minutes as presented. Motion was unanimously approved.

**4. COMMUNICATIONS. Communications Report.** There was no formal report. Evelyn reported that she has spoken with Nancy Letendre of Mason & Associates, the consultants assisting with the rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan elements. She has been asked to keep them on the February agenda. Evelyn reported that the Housing and Demographics element is expected to be the last element formally drafted during the rewrite. The other elements are drafted first for review. Ms. Letendre will attend our February meeting.

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

**6. REPORT, TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON.** No report. Tom is attending another meeting.

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a) Town Council Actions January Meeting.** Discussion of and possible response to affordable housing issues raised at January Town Council meeting. Evelyn reported on two items on the January Town Council agenda that touched on Affordable Housing, and for which no prior notice had been provided for this Commission. Evelyn noted she was at the meeting on another matter, and felt compelled to speak at the public hearing for a proposed zoning ordinance amendment. She reviewed the matters that were of concern to the Affordable Housing Commission.

Proposed ordinance #366 The first was a proposed amendment to the Residential Compounds and Rear Lot Subdivisions portions of the zoning ordinance. This section allows, in exchange for reductions to the allowed density, relief from the requirement of constructing a new town road. The proposed amendment changed the factors used to calculate the number of permitted lots in these low-density subdivisions. Affordable Housing comes up on page 6 ("C. 1. Density") of the proposed ordinance, and Evelyn passed out copies of the relevant page. Evelyn spoke during the public hearing on the matter, stating that because of the language in the draft ordinance, and the lack of a municipal subsidy ordinance, any "affordable housing units" which might be created as a result of the ordinance would not be able to be included in the Town's official LMIH unit count. Evelyn noted this all comes down to the definition of "Affordable Housing" versus "Low and Moderate Income Housing" and the Municipal Subsidy Ordinance which has not been drafted. She stated at the hearing that Section C Density (1) of the Residential Compound Ordinance #366 should be amended to substitute "Low and Moderate Income Housing for the term "Affordable Housing." Evelyn reported that the Public Hearing was continued to February. At the request of the RI Builders Association, the Council granted a month's continuance, suggesting that RIBA confer with the Town Administrator and the Town Planner as to their concerns.

AHC members discussed if we want to send an advisory on this ordinance. AHC members felt that language needs to conform to the zoning definitions. It was agreed that normally the Town Council requests an advisory from AHC, and then we provide it, but in this instance they have not requested that. AHC members also thought that the Town's Solicitors office should provide a draft of a Municipal Subsidy Ordinance. If a subsidy ordinance is not adopted, any units created without federal or state subsidies will face objection from RI Housing because the Town's "subsidy" must be spelt out in a Municipal Subsidy Ordinance in

order for the units to be "counted." Sean suggested that the Chair should draft a letter. AHC members discussed authorizing the Chair to draft a letter to the Town Council regarding these concerns. Ernest made the motion to authorize the Chair to draft a letter to the Town Council regarding Residential Compound Ordinance #366 in light of these discussions, for presentation at the continuance of the Public Hearing in February. Brian seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Evelyn also spoke briefly on the "yield plan" as it is defined in the Subdivision Regulations. This again, is a complicated issue, and although it does not directly impact on LMIH units, it affects the calculation of the number of permitted lots, and may discourage this type of subdivision, thereby excluding this new opportunity for LMIH units.

Proposed Ordinance #369: Evelyn reported that the other item of interest to the AHC was the first reading of a new ordinance #369, being considered at the request of the Washington County Community Development Corporation. This is an 18 page document, dealing with taxation of LMIH units. AHC members discussed the Tax ordinance.

Motion to extend: Sandra made a note on the time and made a motion to extend for 15 minutes. Brian seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Members continued to discuss Ordinance #369, and that we have not been asked for any input to date. Members can review this online. We will watch as it unfolds in February and see if Town Council reaches out to us for input.

**b) Charlestown Comprehensive Plan.** (Continued) Discussion of Housing and Demographics Element (2013 Draft 4) of the 2013 Charlestown Comprehensive Plan Update, including preliminary recommendations for Affordable Housing Plan components for the ongoing Comprehensive Plan revision process. (continued to next meeting)

## **8. OLD BUSINESS**

**a) ChurchWoods Project: (continued). Discussion began earlier under 7(a).** Review and discussion of proposed property tax ordinance for LMIH rental units, with advisory, if deemed necessary, for submission for the public hearing in February. (continued to next meeting).

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

**c) Commissioners' Liaison Reports.** Review of Commission liaison assignments. (continued).

**d) 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.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENT- None.**

**10. NEXT MEETING.** The next regular monthly meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. Discussion. Members discussed rescheduling the meeting to the following Thursday. Everyone seemed to be ok with schedule change. Sandra made motion to reschedule to February 26, 2015. Ernest seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

**11. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion made and seconded to adjourn. Motion was unanimously approved.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Sandra Puchalski , Secretary**

**Approved at the February 26, 2015, meeting of the Affordable Housing Commission.**