

**Affordable Housing Commission – FINAL Minutes**  
**THURSDAY, MAY 28, 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 by Chairman Evelyn Smith at 7:17 PM with 5 voting members present.

**2. ROLL CALL.** Commission members present: Chairman, Evelyn Smith, Vice Chair, Sean White, Recording Secretary, Sandra Puchalski, AHC members, Ernest Morreira & Brian McDonald. Town Council liaison Tom Gentz. Faith LaBossiere was absent and excused.

**3. MINUTES.** Approval of minutes: April 16, 2015 Regular Meeting. Members received a copy of the draft minutes and reviewed. Tom suggested a change to sentence regarding the Narragansett Indian Tribe to clarify that they "do not recognize the Charlestown Building / Zoning Official on zoning issues." Sandra noted the ChurchWoods does not have the capital "W" and would need to be corrected also. With those changes, motion made by Ernest and seconded by Brian to accept the minutes with amendments. Motion carried 5-0.

**4. COMMUNICATIONS.** No communications report.

**5. STAFF REPORTS.** No staff reports.

**6. REPORT, TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON.** Tom reported that the two affected households in the Indian Cedar Trailer Park will be moved out of their existing trailers early in June and there will be two new trailers installed. Both new trailers will be counted by the state as LMIH units because of the 30-year lien that the Town will hold on the trailers.

ChurchWoods is now scheduled for the land acquisition closing at the end of June. The Town Solicitors are working on the language for the documents. Tom reported that the remaining funding has been approved, filling the \$1.9M gap. Tom noted the Town of Charlestown will likely be doing a press release on this.

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a) Edwards Lane.** Status report, Women's Build Day May 2, 2015. Evelyn reported that she had visited the South County Habitat for Humanity construction site of the seventh (and last remaining) new home, as a guest speaker. Habitat director Lou Raymond had commended the Town and the Affordable Housing Commission for the large part they have played in getting this project to completion.

She encouraged AHC members to take a look at the finished development, adding that this has been a very good example of good use of the bond money. The newly-built homes are very impressive and comfortable, and 6 are already occupied, accommodating low income households.

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

**a) Charlestown Comprehensive Plan – AHC status report.** The Commission continued discussion on the draft Affordable Housing Strategy Review as initially proposed in the 2013 Charlestown Comprehensive Plan Update's Housing and Demographics Element.

Evelyn noted that she has not yet sent off our draft remarks to the Planner, and we will take another look, first at the remaining Strategies, and then Policies and Goals if appropriate.

Evelyn pointed out that we had made one editorial comment on Policy No. 3 regarding the use of the term "households" rather than "people" of low and moderate income. Tom's comments suggested the need for a note on Policy 8: "Need to consult with the Town Solicitor on the Tribe's current position."

Evelyn further noted that we have discussed Strategies 1 through 6 at previous meetings, and proposed a new "Strategy 9: Establishing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund."

AHC members discussed Strategy 7: Pursue Regional Strategies. It was noted that regional programs helped to encourage the community and to engage the community in discussions. The Planners meet regionally on occasion but outreach to community is important and needs to be revisited. Ernest also felt that appropriate forums should continue to encourage participation and stimulate collaborative approaches. Members agreed. Secondly, to encourage need for a regional program to continue yearly. Discussion on a Regional Housing Authority and necessity of understanding of what the Housing Authority would provide. Discussion on importance of outreach and supportive services, i.e. Warm Shelter, and those for veterans,

homeless, public welfare. Discussion for a potential small part of the Town Budget to include Public Assistance to bring together this outreach in an effective way, perhaps \$5,000.00. Members discussed many hardship cases that have come to their attention and a way to pull this information together or touch on each situation and come up with a mechanism so that people and households do not fall through the cracks. It would be better to have a pro-active approach vs. a reactive approach. Tom noted that our issues are local and our response should be based on our local needs. We should not let the State dictate to us a generic housing policy as we need to address our own specific needs.

This led to discussion on immediate needs for households and the need for rental units for year-round housing, temporary housing, transition housing for emergencies, etc. It was noted that the households in the trailer park will be transitioning into a hotel for the time of construction. Tom noted we could make continued use of the CDGB money in this manner. Discussion on trailer units and the need perhaps for more units. Tom noted there are 185 mobile homes in town. Evelyn noted rental housing could encourage private investment if it were a safe place for people to invest.

Discussion began on Strategy 8: Employ creatively structured subsidies for both Homeownership and Rental Opportunities. Discussion again on creating trailer home options. The potential to buy existing stock or apartments/multifamily and limit to qualified households. Discussion on the need for data on census information to see what options may be. Members also discussed a voluntary "opt-in" program to encourage the participation of existing stock of homes already present in the community.

**b) Municipal Subsidy Ordinance.** Postpone till next meeting.

**a) Income-Restricted Accessory Dwelling Units.** Review of zoning and tax ordinance needs, mortgage impact, deed restriction and related issues. None.

**b) Commissioners' Liaison Reports.** Review of Commission liaison assignments. None reported.

**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. Evelyn reported here that it was brought to her attention that the Principal of Charlestown Elementary School had asked parents for their help to fill a critical need for families in the Charlestown School/ Chariho for housing until the close of the academic school year. It appears that several families of school aged children in rentals have to leave May 31, or June 1<sup>st</sup> and the school year continues until the middle/ end of June, leaving them homeless. Discussion to encourage homeowners to end lease dates for winter rentals at the estimated end of school year. Sandra did not think this was possible as most owners want a month or 2-3 weeks to get homes ready for their summer season, whether they rent or have family use of the household. Again, this brought home the need for year-round rental units. It was noted that families are living in Burlingame, campers, or moving in with family and friends until they find a summer place to exist in until they can get back into their winter rental. Evelyn noted the same problem exists with the beginning of school as that is usually end of August before Labor Day and many of the winter rentals begin in the first week or so of September, leaving the same families homeless until then and finding a way to send their children to school. AHC members agreed this is a pressing and urgent issue to deal with and the need for out-reach and services is needed here to compile this information as discussed earlier with homeless, veterans, school children and households in need in our community. Evelyn volunteered to float the idea of a collaborative with DEM, in that these families are living in Burlingame and other State Parks, to see about a 10% reserve for affordable units on a seasonal basis that can be counted upon by the households in need without their having to move every 2 weeks within the campground. Sandra thought perhaps we could create the seasonal need housing and perhaps the winter rental market supports the need, but the summer season market does not.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENT.** None

**10. NEXT MEETING.** The next regular monthly meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2015, at 7:00 p.m.

**11. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion made and seconded to adjourn. Sandra made motion and Ernest seconded. All voted in favor of motion. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Karasuk Puchalski, Secretary,

Approved at the June 18, 2015, meeting of the Affordable Housing Commission.