

Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting

Thursday, September 21st, 2023 | 6:00-8:00 pm
Steele Community Room (28 N. Main St.)

MINUTES:

Attendees: Mike Bishop, Alyssa Johnson, Eliza Novick-Smith, Chris Balzano, Kane Sweeney, Madeleine Young, Skip Flanders, and Joe Camaratta.

Called the meeting to order at 6:07pm.

Review agenda:

No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and approve minutes from the 08/17/2023 task force meeting

The Members of the Task Force reviewed and approved the minutes from the August 17th, 2023 Meeting. Kane Sweeney made a motion to accept the minutes and Alyssa Johnson seconded the motion, none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

Relevant Task for Updates

- Introduce Mike Bishop
- Elizabeth Danyew resigned.
- Mark Pomilio moved to another opportunity and will no longer be secretary
- Madeleine Young appointed secretary

Update on on-going Initiatives

- Zoning Update (Alyssa):
 - “Zoning Update Walking tour and Open House” - October 5th 5-7pm. Purpose is to expose the community to zoning examples to promote zoning proposals, and allow for discussion & outreach.
 - i. Town plan for housing in the downtown area. We expect flood plain discussion to arise.
 - ii. www.tinyurl.com/WaterburyZoningUpdate
- Selectboard (Alyssa/Kane):
 - The “Zoning Update” *defines* short term rentals, does not regulate.
 - i. This will allow the Housing Task Force to research more, and recommend next steps.
 - Building market rate housing may be quicker, as it is less involved with tax credits compared to affordable housing (which can take years). Any data from this investigation would help the Housing Task Force.
 - Important for the community to realize that this will take time, but that we are actively working on a resolution.

- (Mike) If we hire from outside the area, housing needs to be available. For teachers, state employees, nurses, etc. Perhaps employers can help find housing.
 - i. This may help draw in municipal employees.
 - ii. (Eliza) May we look at other municipalities to recommend researching their ideas for a proposal.
- (Joe) How many of short term rentals “STR” are actually taking away from the long term rentals “LTR”
 - i. Action item: Define the increase in STR. Where is this happening?
 - Madeleine: Redefine our search based on whether they are secondary residences or only STR. Yurts can be STR.
 - Mike: Yurts can be in question for single family housing.
 - Mike: Long eviction process can be relevant for why landlords may not choose LTR.
 - Joe: Important to define if the STR are full apartments, a room in a residence, a yurt, etc. Air DNA defines “amenities” available. Perhaps we can use these amenities to define a possible LTR versus only STR use.
 - Madeleine: We can gather this data to give to the Selectboard combined with recommendations on what other towns are doing for incentives/regulations.
 - Kane: It is worth gathering this data, regulations may happen.
 - Joe: Is a registry worth it? This will bring better visibility to what specific data we have. Stowe created an Air BnB registry for public safety reasons.
 - Kane: 299 available STR via Air BnB as of today.
 - Mike: State fire marshal inspection for 2 or more units in Waterbury. Accessory Dwelling Units “ADU” will soon need inspections.
 - Eliza: Is worth it to collect data AND send recommendations to the Selectboard. They can take or leave.
 - **Eliza made a motion** that we designate a subgroup to collect additional data on the actual makeup of the STR in Waterbury that are on the market, and collect comparisons to what nearby communities. Make recommendations of regulations or rules that the Selectboard may enact.
 - Timeline: 1 month for data collection, 1 month for nearby community research, 3 months total for proposal recommendations.
 - **None opposed, motion accepted.**

- Housing affordability (Joe)
 - i. We need to collect Market Housing Data
 - Chris: 3 levels of housing: Affordable, Workforce, & Market Rate.
 - Size of units is major defining category for “workforce”.
 - Can work with a developer. We can research what size units are needed in Waterbury.
 - Alyssa: At what point does town owned property developed by a developer become unappealing to the developer?
 - Kane: Folks will still rent housing at market rate, no matter price. It is that dire of a situation.
 - Skip: Apartment buildings have a much lower return rate for developers than single family housing.
 - Kane: Town can regulate but the developer does not have to buy the land.
 - Joe: If we can define what housing is needed, are we at the mercy of the market or can the town regulate?
 - Eliza: Incentivize multiunit housing or converting ADUs and STR? Do we have someone who can use the tax information and zoning codes creatively to help our initiative? Are there incentives that the town can implement to make housing (both rentals and sales) more affordable to community members who work in town?
 - Joe: Can we incentivise new construction?
 - Alyssa: Does the data need to be done by a professional (instead of our volunteer group) for a developer to use our data.
 - Kane: If we make houses to buy available, then apartments will then become available. Building both is helpful.
 - Eliza: We should research how other communities are incentivized.
 - Incentivizing multifamily housing (or housing with an ADU) as much as possible over a single family home.
 - Madeleine: If we build housing with ADUs even, then perhaps more STR would be available for converting to LTR.
 - Joe: New high end housing will still be built, usually not folks from Waterbury building these.
 - Kane: Incentivizing might help deter this.

- Chris: Proposed using the Stanley site as a case study.
 - ii. Median Income data and Housing Market price data need to be paired.
 - Alyssa: We can pull median wages for employees in town to present as data
 - Skip & Kane: Housing for folks that work downtown and walk to work is important
 - Kane: Look at Bennington rent prices. It can be done.
 - Chris: Multifamily housing is good for density regulations.
 - Kane: South Burlington dense housing, while some did not approve, provides more space in other parts of town which is a positive.
 - Alyssa: We can converse with developers based off water and sewer combined with available lots. Present this information.
- Handout Article given by Joe: Request for Proposals (RFP) in Iowa.
 - i. Pg 4 lists addresses of vacant lots and what their use may be.
 - ii. Can we recreate this as a recommendation to the Selectboard for a town created RFP? Would need to work with building and lot owners.
 - Stanley site
 - 10% of units in new apartment buildings in BTV need to be affordable housing units
 - Joe: We can add value by making recommendations on the economics of the affordable housing based on current WBY residents
 - **Eliza makes a motion** to create affordability guidelines for new housing projects based on income of current and future WBY residents.
 - Motion second by Kane.
 - **Opposed by none, motion passed.**
- Existing initiatives:
 - i. Housing Data
 - next to research STR
 - ii. Opportunity inventory
 - Defer until Q1
 - iii. Webpage
 - Kati completed most of this.
 - iv. Research incentives for developers
- Attendance
 - i. Should we put out a call for new members with useful or relevant expertise?
 - Revisit folks from original application
 - Construction contractor

- Land Use lawyer
- Data Analysis
- Community advocacy and communications
- Landlord and/or STR owner

Action Item/research groups:

Kane: STR

Chris: Affordability

Alyssa: Affordability/wages

Eliza: Google doc landing page/Affordability

Madeleine: STR

Joe: STR

Skip: Incentives for developers

Motion to adjourn at 8:04. Motion seconded by Joe.