

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
HOUSING TASK FORCE MEETING  
Minutes of November 4, 2022**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Economic Development Director Tom Davis, Committee Erin Hicks-Tibbles, and Committee Member Lydia Petty. Also in attendance were the Northfield Zoning Administrator, Mitch Osiecki, Carolyn Stevens (online), Sue McMartin, and a representative from the Veteran’s Place (online).
- II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.**
- III. DISCUSSION**
- a. Housing/Land/Funding.** Mr. Schulz brought the meeting to order and asked Mr. Davis to comment on the first topics of housing, land, and funding. Mr. Davis explained that, while working on the task force setup, he has been working on potential housing projects with Mr. Schulz. He pointed out that different funding is dedicated to different housing needs in the state, including rental and purchase, affordable housing, and various income-based opportunities among the list of suggested task force focuses Mr. Davis suggested were affordable and market-rate rental housing and affordable and mid-income housing for purchase. He pointed out that available resources will likely play a role in the prioritization of the focus areas.
- b. Housing Needs Assessment.** Mr. Davis reported that a new housing needs study is coming out shortly (the last was done in 2016), which will inform the task force. Ms. Petty asked if the group anticipated conducting additional, local-to-Northfield needs assessments as one of the group’s first tasks. Mr. Davis agreed the additional information may be valuable and suggested that the group look at the new study to see what information would be helpful to gather in addition to the new study. The issue of private developers excluding affordable housing projects because of low to no economic upside was discussed. Mr. Davis pointed out that, in this market between the cost of materials and land, there isn’t really such a thing as “affordable housing.” Mr. Davis discussed his work with a company considering manufacturing tiny homes in Northfield in partnership with the Norwich University architecture and engineering departments. The goal is to first determine if there are steps that can be taken to make them more affordable than current tiny home and modular options.
- c. Mission/Vision Statements.** Mr. Davis reintroduced the draft mission statement for discussion. The draft states “*The mission of the Northfield, Vermont Housing Task Force is to affect the prudent and expeditious process of increasing available housing in the town of Northfield.*” Ms. Hicks-Tibbles proposed that the group also have a future focus in the guiding documents so that longer-term solutions are considered while working to cure the immediate issues. Ms. Petty pointed out that, given how large the issue of housing has become, it is hard to imagine what that future vision would look like, but agreed that there should be some form of a long-term vision that looks at the overall issue of housing in Northfield. Petty said she believed that the group’s goal should be that a person could live in Northfield for their whole life if they wanted to; that the town has housing that fits the public throughout their whole lives from childhood to their elder years. Discussion took place as to whether that focus was better suited for the group’s vision statement. Ms. Petty suggested the group look at other task force mission statements to see if there is valuable language to include. Ms. McMartin added that the homeless population is essential to include in the group’s mission and vision.

Ms. Hicks-Tibbles suggested that some components of the vision statement and best practices guidelines wait until the group is expanded with more members. She also suggested creating a resource portal. Mr. Davis agreed and asked Ms. Hicks Tibbles if she would head up the portal project.

- d. Review Proposed Areas of Focus.** - Mr. Davis reviewed the initial list of proposed areas of focus, including:
- i. Affordable housing (both for rent and purchase)
  - ii. Middle-income housing (mainly for purchase)
  - iii. Zoning modernization efforts to increase housing development
  - iv. Funding sources for individuals and development

Ms. Hicks-Tibbles and Petty both stated the need to be sure that the definition of affordable housing fits the town of Northfield. Ms. Petty suggested that middle-income housing should include rentals, given residents like Norwich University employees may be more transient and prefer to rent. Regarding zoning modernization, Ms. Hicks Tibbles suggested that the group invite the Northfield Planning Commission to learn along with the task force as it could better inform all stakeholders, given that the Planning Commission is in the middle of working with a professional consultant on Northfield's zoning modernization plan. Mr. Osiecki said the Planning Commission was halfway through its review process. Mr. Davis asked if the task force could have access to the working document on zoning modernization, given it is a public document. Mr. Schulz said any information that goes to the planning commission is public.

- e. Task Force Composition.** The group discussed the potential composition of the task force, including the number of members, representation in the community, and types of potential experts. While not formally determined, the group generally agreed that the total task force should be around seven members. It was also agreed that the group should regularly ask experts in all areas of knowledge regarding the housing crisis to join a meeting to share their expertise. The group also agreed that additional members might be considered in an advisory capacity. Ms. Stevens asked if there has been any thought about a stipend for potential group members needing financial assistance to participate in the task force. Ms. Hicks-Tibbles said there were some potential funding sources that should be researched once the group got closer to selecting specific members. All members of the group agreed to consider the task force composition and return with their suggestions at the next Task Force meeting.
- f. Meeting Mechanics.** - The group agreed to meet approximately once per month on a Friday at 2 pm. The next meeting will take place on Friday, December 9, 2022, at 2 pm.
- g. Related Matters.** None.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Unscheduled) There was none.

**V. ADJOURNMENT.** The subcommittee was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Thomas G. Davis*

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Economic Development Director and Acting Clerk