

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
HOUSING TASK FORCE MEETING
Minutes of February 17, 2023**

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 Mitch Osiecki (Northfield Zoning Administrator), potential new task force members Blake Pierson, Tyler Renaud, and Megan Roush; and guests Kevin Camisa and Shawna Foran representing the Foran Family Trust land in Northfield.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

IV. DISCUSSION w/POTENTIAL NEW TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The Task Force met with three potential new members who introduced themselves and provided their backgrounds.

Megan Roush lives in Northfield and is the Director of Development for the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. She is immersed in housing statewide and has a deep knowledge of housing in Vermont.

Blake Pierson moved to Northfield with his wife and children. He grew up with his family's construction and development company, then went into the technology space with real estate, and is passionate about housing and looking to help out in the community.

Tyler Renaud has been living in Northfield for almost four years, renting the entire time. He is from Vermont originally and has always been passionate about wanting Vermont to be a place where young people can live. As the housing market has become more and more untenable, Tyler has been looking for an opportunity to start doing something about it.

Ms. Petty introduced herself and asked the candidates if they had questions. Mr. Pierson asked about the goals overall and over the next 6–12 months and how new members can help. Ms. Hicks-Tibbles explained that the group was still in the formative stage with their mission and specific goals and wanted to include additional members before establishing them in final form. Mr. Pierson asked what the larger of what the town wants for growth. Ms. Petty said the town plan was the vision that was last agreed upon by the community.

Mr. Schulz added that the municipality needs to do more in terms of facilitating more housing in the forms of both affordable and medium-income properties focused on growth within the main part of town but also adding housing outside of the downtown in a responsible manner. Mr. Pierson asked if a specific number of dwellings need to be available to meet the housing demand.

Mr. Davis explained that the real answer is that the need for housing far outstrips the number the town can construct over the next few years at least. He also pointed out that the order of priorities for types of housing will be majorly dictated by the types of land and developers the town can identify, with every housing category needing attention.

Ms. Petty explained that the group is looking for broad representation from the community and its many segments, but that anyone who is passionate about the housing problem would be a valuable contributor. Mr. Davis said that each of the candidates “checks the box” of the types of representation the task force is looking for. Ms. Roush asked if the task force had done anything with manufactured housing communities, also called trailer parks and if there was any possibility of representation from that community. She also asked if there was any funding possible for a member who would need assistance with child care, transportation or other need.

The group asked all candidates to stay for the rest of the meeting if they could. All stayed. Before beginning discussion items, the rest of the group took a moment to introduce themselves.

V. DISCUSSION

- a. 110 Main Street Project Update.** Mr. Davis reported that the town was successful in obtaining a \$25,000 grant to pay for Phase II work under the state’s Brownfield program. This is a necessary program to complete before the construction of an apartment complex can commence. The property also qualified for the BRELLA program, which provides up to 80% of the funding needed to remediate any contamination on the property. The work continues.
- b. Potential Retirement Housing Location.** Mr. Davis met with management at Mayo Health Care, the state’s Block Grant program manager, and the Executive Director of Downstreet about the possibility of building independent living dwellings for retired residents in Northfield on the Mayo property. This was a preliminary meeting to learn the level of interest and chance of funding such a project. More information will be provided as available.
- c. Foran Family LLC Property Update.** Mr. Camisa reported that Ms. Foran and the family have been working through the details of the 181-acre parcel accessed at the end of Whetstone Drive, to understand access points and rights-of-way from various roads. Mr. Camisa said that the idea of workforce housing, affordable housing, and other housing projects works with what the family has in mind. He said that they want to be involved in how the development will look and be utilized, but not be the developer. He said they want local feelings and local ideas to be considered by Shawna, her mother (Bonnie Chouinard), and her family. Mr. Camisa said they want to hear the vision for the property, which has not yet been created. Mr. Davis asked if the family would consider phasing the project based on the availability of investors and developers rather than have a global plan for the entire property. Mr. Camisa confirmed and agreed with that approach. Mr. Camisa also said that his role in the project is to work with the family and oversee the plans to be considered for development.

- d. ARPA Funding Requests for Select Board.** Mr. Davis suggested he assemble his list of potential ARPA funds usage and can add items from the task force. Ms. Hicks Tibbles brought up the idea of a program to finance deposits for new renters, funding for the task force to provide to a member who might have specific financial burdens that need to be covered in order to attend meetings, and funding for a mediator to resolve landlord-tenant disputes in the community on a periodic basis. Ms. Roush suggested Vermont Legal Aid might help with the setup of the program.
- e. Information Gathering Deadline for the Task Force.** Mr. Davis suggested that the task force find a four-hour block of time, likely after regular working hours, to complete the information gathering and finalize the group’s mission and vision. The task force agreed.
- f. Related Matters.** The task force thanked the candidates for their time, after which they left the meeting. The task force then voted unanimously to recommend all three candidates to the Select Board for appointment as task force members.

VI. ADJOURNMENT. The subcommittee was adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Davis

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Economic Development Director