

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
NORTHFIELD HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes of August 10, 2023

I. ROLL CALL. Members Erin Hicks-Tibbles, Lydia Petty, Tom Bright, Danielle Pelczarski, and Economic Development Director Tom Davis.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

IV. DISCUSSION:

a. Discussion of Housing Needs. Mr. Bright spoke of the need for senior housing in the downtown area so that seniors could live in smaller dwellings, but stay in town, and their current houses would become more stock for residents seeking to buy a home.

Ms. Pelczarski has asked how much housing has been built or rental units added in the last few years. The group didn't have immediately available numbers. Pelczarski discussed the need for rentals for new Norwich employees so that they can ultimately find a home to purchase.

Ms. Hicks-Tibbles mentioned the age of the town's housing inventory creating a challenge. Ms. Petty noted that many people are "over housed," living in homes larger than their current needs. Mr. Bright mentioned that a senior housing project would be ideal if it included a mix of age groups.

B. Future View

Ms. Petty discussed the need to increase the housing density near downtown and make sure the infrastructure is available to do so. Ms. Pelczarski noted that the town has significant capacity available in its water/sewer system.

Mr. Bright brought up the point of more commercial space available in town. Mr. Davis noted that there is likely more available than it may seem as the town transitions.

Ms. Pelscarski talked about students who want to stay in town and work in the summer need places to live, as do older athletes who come to the university. The group agreed that walkability is an important factor in all housing considerations. Ms. Petty spoke of Green Mountain Apartments as a successful example of this type of housing. Mr. Bright talked about duplexes and condos as part of the inventory that should be considered.

Mr. Bright spoke of a need for a rental registry. Discussion took part on how attempts to make that a state mandate and how they have been struck down. Ms. Hicks-Tibbles suggested that Northfield has a rental site as a form of registry.

Other suggestions included continued flood planning and zoning bylaws matching the needs stated. The group wanted to make sure that any work done is coordinated with the Downtown Development and Housing Task Force.

The group discussed setting up a table at either the Labor Day festivities or Night on the Common to gather information and inform residents about the housing crisis.

C. Tasks Discussion. Mr. Bright suggested one immediate task should be the coordination with the Downtown Development and Housing Task Force. The second immediate task was to find out about best practices other committees use and what this group should adopt.

Ms. Hicks-Tibbles asked if the group needed to be doing more work outside of the subcommittee meetings. Ms. Petty it was important to do outside work, but was also mindful of people's time. Ms. Hicks-Tibbles offered to set up a Google Doc where they can assemble articles and information on best practices.

d. Other Matters. None

V. ADJOURNMENT. The subcommittee adjourned at approximately 7:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Davis

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Economic Development Director