

Memorandum

11/22/21

To: Housing Commissioners

From: Heather Carrington, Community and Economic Development Officer

RE: November Housing Commission Meeting

Review Housing Goal Update

City Council received the first housing goal update on the FY22 strategic housing priorities at their meeting on November 15th. The update memo has been included in your materials. Housing Commission Chair, Robert Millar, and Council Liaison, Jim Duncan, attended and participated in the discussion.

There was a robust conversation about housing issues in Winooski driven in large part by comments from the public. Public concerns reflected many of the issues recently and currently being discussed by the Commission. Specifically, residents were concerned about housing quality issues, the need for multi-bedroom housing for larger families, and the need for changes to zoning to remove arbitrary barriers to construction of much needed new housing. Staff will provide an overview of the Housing Update, with Robert Millar and Councilor Duncan to provide their comments on the discussion. For those who wish to watch the complete discussion, the video recording of the City Council meeting is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2rceRrBoeU>. The Housing Update starts at about 49:52 in the recording.

Housing Quality Discussion - Overview of Municipal Code and Residential Inspection Checklist

The Housing Commission work plan for this year calls for the Commission to "Evaluate housing quality in Winooski." Fire Chief and Director of Code Enforcement, John Audy, and Equity Director, Yas Gordon joined the Commission to kick off the discussion at the October meeting. As was discussed, the Equity Audit of Winooski will contain recommendations for improving housing equity in the city. With the audit projected to be complete in January, and an FY22 Council priority for staff to "Update Public Building Ordinance", it will be important for the Housing Commission to be well prepared to participate in making recommendations for ordinance changes. Winooski Municipal Code Chapter 9 covers Housing and Chapter 17 covers the Public Building Registry. Both have been included in the packet for your review. In addition, the Winooski Residential Inspection Checklist that Chief Audy



referenced at our last meeting is included for review. Familiarity with these documents will assist the Housing Commission as we prepare to dive further into evaluating housing quality in Winooski, and make recommendations for potential change.

Municipal ARPA Funding - HTF Discussion

The Housing Commission FY22 work plan calls for the Housing Commission to "Identify Potential Funding Streams for the Housing Trust Fund." The influx of federal funding from the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) creates a moment of opportunity to address housing needs both at a municipal and a statewide level. The City will be in receipt of ARPA funds totaling \$2,192,294.25, and has received half of the full disbursement equaling \$1,096,147 to-date. The remaining installment will be received next year. The Mayor and staff have begun outlining a proposed process to prioritize ARPA funding allocations which will include robust community feedback, Commission support and staff guidance. Each of the Winooski Commissions will be asked to provide feedback and recommendations in the coming months.

As discussed at the October Housing Commission meeting, a portion of the municipal ARPA funds could be allocated to the Housing Trust Fund. The Commission expressed support for using ARPA funds for this purpose. ARPA allocated funds are required to be fully spent out by December 31st, 2026. In order to meet the deadline for fully spending the funds if allocated to the HTF, it will likely be necessary to develop a discrete program to ensure the full spend. Based on discussions about housing equity and housing quality issues in Winooski, the Commission may wish to consider advocating for ARPA funds to be used as HTF grants to address housing equity and quality. One option would be to create a grant program for sound mitigation. The urgency of sound mitigation has been a priority topic in our community, and the plan for federal sound mitigation funding is inadequate. A disproportionate number of Winooski homes are directly impacted by being in the Burlington International Airport flight path. While municipal ARPA funds could only cover a small percentage of homes, the grant guidelines could potentially prioritize:

- homes in the higher decibel contours
- households with children
- survivors of trauma
- traditionally marginalized community members

This is just one example of a potential use of municipal ARPA funds. There are many possibilities, so please come to the meeting with your ideas about how the local ARPA funds could be utilized to support housing goals in Winooski.

