

## I. Call to Order

Members Present: Leslie Black-Plumeau, Anna Wageling, Jessica Bridge, Chris Melnyk

City Staff Present: Heather Carrington

Guests Present: Councilor Jim Duncan

Call to Order by: Leslie Black-Plumeau

Meeting Start Time: 6:07 pm

Minutes Recorded by: Anna Wageling

## II. Public Comment

None

## III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Tabled due to lack of quorum of members present for previous meeting.

## IV. Elect Officers

Tabled for a future meeting with more members present.

## V. Discuss City Council direction for Housing Commission Priorities

The Housing Commission reviewed the housing memo that was discussed by City Council at the July 6th Council meeting. There is a clear concern about housing stability in Winooski during the pandemic. Closure of the economy has resulted in economic hardships for many of our residents, which may result in an inability to pay mortgages and rents. Given the high proportion of Winooski households that are cost-burdened (36% of homeowners and 56% of renters), City Councilors stressed the importance of tracking and assessing information in the event that local action is needed. While a formal vote has not yet been taken by the City Council to shift the work plan priorities, some of the proposed work plan includes:

1. Compile data on local eviction filings, foreclosure filings, and unemployment claims, as possible;
2. Enumerate the limits and restrictions on use of the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and Winooski Community Development Corporation (CDC) monies for the purposes of preventing foreclosures and evictions;
3. Compile local conditions and needs, review state programs, and perhaps align with our Housing Trust Fund program;
4. Gather information from the community (landlords and renters) on what they are hearing in the community, what needs are unmet, and what problem are we trying to solve There will be a formal City Council vote at the August 3rd meeting.

## VI. 2020 Work Plan Review

The Commission reviewed progress on its 2020 work plan. The primary objective for last year was to get the Housing Trust Fund up and running. We completed the HTF policies and procedures (Goal 1), while goals 2 & 4 are dependent upon utilization of the HTF. The remaining work on the HTF primarily lies with City staff and Opportunities Credit Union. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly delayed work on the HTF. In addition, based on the City Council discussion about possibly repurposing some of the fund, further work on establishing the MOU, application process, and promotional materials has been halted pending Council direction at the August 3rd meeting.

The Commission completed Goal 6 – supporting the Planning Commission in updating parking recommendations, and Goal 3 – monitoring incoming housing developments in comparison with affordability targets. Incomplete goals include Goal 5 - Investigate and Make Recommendations for Further Funding Sources for Housing Trust Fund, and Goal 7 - Support Planning Commission Efforts to Evaluate Form-Based Code Affordable Housing Incentives. The loss of four months of Commission meetings has undoubtedly left the Commission behind on our work plan. The unfinished goals may roll over into the work plan for 2021, or may be deprioritized based on City Council policy direction based on pressing concerns about the current economic crisis.

## VII. 2021 Work Plan

The Commission developed a recommended 2021 work plan to best support housing stability. The plan involves rolling most of the unfinished goals from 2020 into the 2021 plan and adds several recommendations specifically related to housing stabilization concerns expressed by City Council. The Housing Commission unanimously voted to propose a work plan as follows:

### From the 2020 Work Plan

1. Move forward with Housing Trust Fund as previously planned.
2. Launch HTF.
3. Review and make funding recommendations for HTF.
4. Track HTF outcomes.
5. Investigate and pursue further funding for HTF.
6. Eliminate the goal of providing Planning Commission support in evaluating FBC incentives to open capacity for more pressing housing stabilization concerns.

### Housing Stabilization

1. Pursue Vermont Community Foundation grant to hire housing consultant to undertake data gathering and analysis; if received
2. Consultant will perform analysis of housing stability in Winooski specifically looking at threat of evictions and foreclosures; and if warranted by conditions
3. Identify and pursue funding source for housing stabilization grant program; if received
4. Develop a direct assistance program for renters, landlords and homeowners;
5. Housing Commission's work plan will include evaluating program applications and making award recommendations to City Council

Staff has reached out to the Vermont Community Foundation to propose a potential grant

application and explore the level of support for it. While we had hoped to apply for support to hire a consultant to compile housing data as requested by City Council as well as seed funding for a rental and mortgage assistance program, the average grant awards are around \$50,000. Staff will be having a follow up meeting with Vermont Community Foundation representatives to discuss a more fundable request for consultant services only.

The Commission voted unanimously in favor of this approach to the 2021 work plan, which will be presented to City Council at their August 3rd meeting.

### **VIII. Adjourn**

Motion by: Jessica

Second: Leslie

Meeting End Time: 6:52 pm

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