

I. Call to Order

Members Present: Robert Millar, Anna Wageling, Jessica Bridge, “Deac” Decarreau, Jack Commo, Stevya Mukuzo

City Staff Present: Heather Carrington, Fire Chief John Audy, and Equity Director Yasamin Gordon

Guests Present: Councilor Jim Duncan

Call to Order by: Robert Millar

Meeting Start Time: 6:03 PM

Minutes Recorded by: Anna Wageling

II. Public Comment

None

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes from 9/27/21 were approved.

IV. Council Update

The City Manager search has been extended. The City will be partnering with a search firm to expand the search. Meanwhile, City Council has hired a professional Interim City Manager, Wendy Harrison. Wendy started work on the 19th.

City Council is entering budget season. Guidance to staff was to try to maintain level services while keeping the tax increase under 2%. As part of the discussion of budget priorities for next year, Councilor Duncan advocated for increasing staff capacity for housing policy work.

Starting in November, the Commissions will be engaged in the planning conversation around ARPA funds. A framework for community engagement was approved at the October 4th City Council meeting.

V. City Updates

Staff and Councilor Duncan attended the CCRPC Convening of the Housing Commissions on Thursday, September 30th. Commissioners should have received direct email invitations from CCRPC. The primary agenda item for the meeting was a review of the results of the Building Homes Together Initiative over the last 5 years.

Building Homes Together Initiative exceeded the goal of constructing 3,500 new homes in Chittenden County over the 5 year period, but fell short of the target of 20% of the new homes being permanently affordable homes. The City of Winooski exceeded its proportional goal of new homes constructed and the affordability goal.

Staff participated in a Building Homes Together 2.0 focus group last week to help to set the goals for the next 5 year initiative. Once the goals are officially set, staff will report back to the Commission.

VI. Housing Quality Discussion

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. Chief Audy discussed some of the intersecting issues that impact the safety and health of rental housing in Winooski. Some issues discussed included: the need for more effective and supported interface between landlords and tenants, empowering tenants to report issues earlier, lack of resources to settle new arrivals to the U.S. with the support that they need, the resettlement housing process doesn’t offer agency to immigrants and refugees in selecting their own housing/landlord, people experiencing mental health issues without the necessary wrap-around support can end up in unhealthy and unsafe housing environments, repeat code violations occur when tenants and/or landlords don’t have the support they need. John emphasized that maintaining and improving the quality of the existing housing stock is more important than incentivizing new housing construction. He pointed out that incentivizing new housing will not correct the hundreds of units that are well below the minimum housing standards.

Yas Gordon discussed the city equity audit and the specific focus on housing equity. IBG is the consulting firm, and they take a data-based approach. IBG will focus on reverse-synthesizing the intent of housing policy versus the outcomes and how the policies can be changed to meet the intent. The audit will focus on direct feedback from the residents to establish what they feel are the most pressing issues to be addressed. The audit results will help to drive the conversation forward by identifying areas for improvement. This is just the first of many discussions.

VII. Review Draft Memo for Planning Commission re: Zoning for Great Neighborhoods

At the August meeting, the Housing Commission discussed the possibility of making recommendations to the Planning Commission for changes to the residential zoning requirements to support development of additional housing in the city. After reviewing Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods at the September meeting, the Commission agreed to move forward a recommendation that the Planning Commission consider zoning changes contained in the document. At the Commission’s request, staff has drafted a preliminary memo to the Planning Commission highlighting recommended topics of bylaw reform and areas where Winooski zoning already successfully integrates the principles contained in the document. The Commission reviewed the draft memo and the following edits were recommended:

Staff should clarify that the recommendations included in the memo are direct references to the Zoning Guide. An initial clarifying sentence, references to the page numbers in the guide and use of quotation marks will make this clearer.

Overall, the Commission was in agreement that this document captures the intended message. Staff will make edits and the memo will be delivered to the Planning Commission.

VIII. Discuss Housing Trust Fund Potential Sources

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. Based on the timeline for discussing ARPA funds, staff has prioritized a conversation about potential funding streams for the Housing Trust Fund. The following potential sources have been identified by staff:

- ARPA Funds – local municipal allocation
- Winooski Community Development budget reserves
- Reallocation of a portion of the Winooski Small Business Loan Fund
- An annual percentage of the TIF revenue starting in 2025

The Commission expressed interest in looking at ARPA and TIF revenues but was not in support of using Community Development budget reserves or a reallocation of the Winooski Small Business Loan Fund.

IX. Housing Goal Update for City Council - November 15th

Staff informed the Commission that the first goal update on the FY22 Housing priorities will be presented at the November 15th City Council meeting. This is a staff presentation, rather than a Commission presentation, but all Commissioners are welcome to attend to weigh in. Councilor Duncan encouraged Commissioners to attend to elevate the issue of housing quality through sharing of stories and experiences.

X. Adjourn

Motion: Deac

Second: Jack

Meeting End Time: 7:46 PM