

**TOWN OF WARREN
PLANNING COMMISSION
AFFORDABLE HOUSING - TOWN PLAN MEETING
MAY 19, 2004**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Donaldson, John Goss, Laura Crandall, Lisa Miserendino & Don LaHaye

AGENDA:

- 1) 7 PM FREE Spaghetti Dinner
- 2) 7:30 PM Call Meeting to Order - John Donaldson will give a brief introduction to the affordable housing problem in Warren
- 3) Introduction from the Panel Members - each of the panel members will describe their role in the affordable housing problem and note some ideas for improving housing affordability in Warren
- 4) General Discussion, Q & A with Panel
- 5) 9:00 PM Adjourn

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Donaldson called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

III. INTRODUCTION FROM PANEL MEMBERS

Susan Lee introduced herself as the co-chair of Habitat for Humanity. She explained that the local chapter of Habitat is currently working on their third and fourth houses for low income families. She mentioned that the town could take the following steps to help Habitat for Humanity in their quest to bring affordable housing to low income families:

- Address affordable housing in more detail in the Town Plan. For some of their grant applications they must reference the Town Plan to prove there is community support for their projects.
- Waive all town fees (i.e. zoning permits, subdivisions, road cuts, health permits, etc.)
- Allocate some staff time for helping them evaluate parcels to determine if the property is viable and can meet the needs
- Donate land to Habitat for Humanity to help bring the cost of development down

Margo Wade introduced herself as a staff member of the Sugarbush Report Planning Department. She noted that recent data indicates the Mad River Valley is short approximately 100 affordable units. Sugarbush Resort currently provides approximately 50 beds for employee housing. They would like to develop more beds for their employees, however to make it economically feasible they would need to partner with another organization or business to use the space during the summer months. She noted that as part of the Lodge at Lincoln Peak Act 250 permit Sugarbush Resort will be providing \$76,000 toward an affordable housing project in the Mad River Valley. She recommended increasing density in growth centers and looking into why the increased density allowed in the Lincoln Peak Base Area has not been taken advantage of.

Barry Simpson introduced himself as the current Chairman of the Warren Selectboard, as well as a long time member of the Planning Commission. He believes that affordable housing should be incorporated into the existing housing stock throughout town. If a development is proposed, he would prefer it be mixed incomes. He noted that the Selectboard is working on a program to provide low interest loans to people outside of Warren Village to upgrade their septic systems. He explained that the age of the average

Warren resident is going up and the town needs to be creative to maintain the attraction of the town to young people.

Karen Winchell introduced herself as a long time affordable housing advocate, as well as a Mad River Housing Coalition member. She believes that the market in the Mad River Valley makes it very difficult for low income families to purchase a house. She explained that people with a lot of money can pay cash for a house, while low income people would need to take more time to get a loan from the bank. One way she noted to help the problem is to have a community land bank with funding to take affordable houses or property off the market and give people time to secure financing. Ms. Winchell proposed amending the zoning to have a "minimum density" instead of just a maximum density. The town could identify growth centers and if a developer or land owner wants to develop a large parcel they would need to pay for the privilege of taking the rest of the developable land out of the market. She noted that the town could also charge a surcharge for larger homes and/or larger lots that are developed. Another option is to require a certain number of lots that are subdivided to be allocated for perpetual affordable housing. If someone was subdividing a small number of lots they could pay a pro-rated amount of money into an affordable housing fund based on the number of lots they create. Her last thought was related to how the town defined density. She explained that in the Town of Warren a six bedroom house and a one bedroom apartment each count as one unit. In reference to the Behn Road affordable housing site, she noted that if the Rural Residential District were a receiving area for the Transfer of Development Rights that the town could have used some of the rights they have banked to increase the density of the project and made it a viable project.

Pat Pinkston introduced herself as the director of the Yestermorrow Design School as well as a member of the Mad River Valley Housing Coalition. Yestermorrow now builds "community buildings", but they would like to get involved with affordable housing. She believes that infill building, using the existing housing stock, multi-unit dwellings, accessory dwellings, mixed income, land banking and cluster development near municipal services all need to be involved in finding a solution to the affordable housing problem in the valley.

Anna Whiteside introduced herself as a realtor in the valley as well as a member of the Mad River Valley Housing Coalition. She believes that people need to take "baby-steps" to solve the affordable housing problem and avoid larger projects. She mentioned coming up with an inventory of all of the multiple-unit dwellings in the Mad River Valley and having the towns or CVCLT purchase a right of first refusal or purchase them outright when they come on the market.

Garth Genge introduced himself as an employee of the Central Vermont Community land Trust, a member of the Fayston Planning Commission as well as a member of the Mad River Valley Housing Coalition. He believes that more community support for projects would be helpful. He explained that if a few people show up to a public meeting in opposition of a project it puts the project in jeopardy. He noted that people in support of the project usually don't come to public meetings, but they should show their support. He mentioned that the town could help get the word out about educational opportunities that CVCLT offers. He is also a proponent of the land bank and allowing for transfer of development rights into the Rural Residential District. Ms. Winchell and Mr Genge

explained that in order for the Behn Road site to work out they would have only needed 3 or 4 more units.

IV. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The public mentioned the following items:

- Selling town land with limited access to fund the purchase of land suitable for affordable housing
- The importance of the design for the affordable housing, maybe apartments in a barn style
- Asking people with a lot of land to donate 1 acre parcels and take the tax credit
- A way around zoning – “performance standards” where the developer must convince the DRB that the project meets a specific need in the town and conforms to the Town Plan
- The loss of rental housing, trying to preserve existing rental housing
- How density “looks” small houses on 1 acre lots versus clustered development with open space

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Donaldson, seconded by Mr. LaHaye, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon M. Hill
DRB/PC Assistant

PLANNING COMMISSION

John Donaldson (date)

John Goss (date)

Donald La Haye (date)

Lisa Miserendino (date)

Laura Crandall (date)