

Draft Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness November 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Members Present: John Haffner (Chair), Jen Kravitz (Vice-Chair), Nancy Trottier, and Ally Tufenkjian (Selectboard Liaison)

Member Absent: Dan Nott

Public: Michael Redmond
Lori Hirshfield (staff)

1. Call Meeting to Order

John Haffner called the meeting of the Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness (HCHH) to order at 6:00 PM, and read the public notice regarding a hybrid meeting format.

2. HCHH Member to do Meeting Minutes

Jen Kravitz took the meeting minutes.

3. Review Order of Agenda

There were no changes.

4. Approve October 19, 2023 Committee Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Public Comment

There were no comments.

6. Committee Member Openings Update

Two openings remain on the committee. John Haffner recently spoke to an interested party and the Town is advertising on both the website and List-serve. Ally Tufenkjian reported that the Town is considering hiring a public outreach officer which would be helpful.

7. Town Plan Housing Chapter Update

A community gathering was held on 10/9/23 and attendees were able to look at the draft and provide feedback. John Haffner and Michael Redmond reported that a good discussion followed and there was constructive feedback from community members. Lori Hirshfield added that she will integrate the community input into the draft.

Ally Tufenkjian asked about key feedback. They were noted to be:

- Availability of land
- Restrictions on land and how to overcome them.

- Cost of land and construction
- Hartford is making progress increasing units but needs to look more specifically at the breakdown of type and affordability.
- There is a need to look at how Hartford does business; what needs to change to get units built.
- Consideration of Act 47, the housing initiative passed this year by the VT legislature.

The Planning Commission/Steering Committee will meet again to move forward with evaluating input, making necessary changes and deciding if the document is ready to go.

8. Update on Haven Low Barrier Shelter Proposal

Michael Redmond presented information to the Committee on the proposed low barrier shelter. He will present at the 12/18/23 Planning Commission meeting. The proposal is for the old 25,000 Gifts building on Route 5 at the intersection of Route 4. With an addition to the building there will be 20 beds, a day program, meals (dinner and breakfast) and open year-round. Money has been raised; more is needed.

The façade of the building will be greatly improved and landscaping added. The town is planning a roundabout there which will benefit them. Multiple studies and site planning have been done to meet Act 47 requirement. A bus stop has been requested of Advance Transit. Michael shared sketches of the site plan. If they proceed, the shelter may be able to open in June of 2025. Michael also reported that The Haven is participating in the winter shelter in Lebanon both this and next year. John Haffner noted that the HCHH would not be taking a position on the application but Committee members can attend the December 18th meeting representing themselves. Michael stated that he is available to provide any further info as needed.

9. Discussion on Housing Development Program

Lori Hirshfield presented information and a draft of the Housing Development Program Pilot Project to increase housing in Hartford. The project proposes using a small amount of funding (\$150,000- possibly ARPA funds) to assist community members in adding separate dwelling units to properties with an existing home. The goal is to create a structure/plan that encourages and assists community members to participate in housing solutions partnered with the Town.

The concept that grants and or loans could be given out incrementally to offset costs and incentivize people to join in solving the housing shortage. The HCHH will have a role in this. Lori provided a diagram example of the different areas where people can enter the process of housing development from community education to getting initial information on individual projects, meeting with planners and contractors to initiating projects.

There was discussion on using ARPA funds, using the Hartford Business Revolving Loan Program as a model and the need for time to develop all the pieces of the program. John Haffner observed that HCHH is a place to have conversations about this and assist in developing the pilot program.

Lori will present the proposed program at the Nov 28, 2023 Selectboard meeting as part the Planning and Development Department FY 2025 proposed budget. There was further discussion on particulars of the draft. Why 10- 15 units? How the money might be allocated. How technical resources could be provided for free by vendors for short periods (2 hours) of time to help assess feasibility and options. There was discussion on how best to present the concept criteria to add clarity to the use of funding. It was pointed out that adding restrictions to disbursement of funds would require enforcement that would require significant staff time and could complicate the process. There was discussion if there could be another funding source given the time limitation on commitment and use of the funds.

There was discussion on adding a goal that the program is to motivate, entice, and educate people to get started on the process and to do it at the local level. There was the question if units could be used for short-term rentals and there was general agreement that it should not be allowed for a period of time.

It was suggested that funding parameters could be a minimum of \$5000 and maximum of 10% of the owner investment up to \$15,000. Lori also noted that added units would provide additional revenue for the Town because of increased property values.

10. News from Committee Members

Lori Hirshfield reported that the Norwich Housing Committee would like to get together with HCHH to facilitate improved communication between towns with similar goals. The Committee members agreed that this was a good idea and targeted for January or February of next year.

11. Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 PM

Committee Members as of 11-16-2023

John Haffner, Chair (through 12/12/2024)

Jennifer Kravitz, Vice Chair (through 4/03/2025)

Dan Nott (through 11/28/2024)

Nancy Trottier (9/18/2025)

Ally Tufenkjian, Selectboard Liaison

Vacant Position

Vacant Position

Lori Hirshfield, Staff Liaison