

**Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness
February 15, 2024 Meeting Minutes Approved**

Attendance:

Members Present: John Haffner (Chair), Nancy Trottier, Maggie Burnett, Dan Nott, Ally Tufenkjian (Selectboard Liaison), Lori Hirshfield (staff)

Member Absent: Jennifer Kravitz (Vice-Chair)

1. Call Meeting to Order

John Haffner called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM. He then read the script regarding the meeting being a hybrid format with in-person and remote access.

2. HCHH Member to do Meeting Minutes

Maggie Burnett offered to do the minutes for this meeting.

3. Review Order of Agenda

There were no changes to the order of items on the meeting agenda.

4. Approve December 21, 2023 Committee Meeting Minutes

There were no changes to the Minutes. Dan Nott made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and Maggie Burnett seconded the motion. The motion was approved with Ally Tufenkjian abstaining since she was not present at the meeting.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

6. HCHH Meeting Date Change and Agenda

The March HCHH meeting has been rescheduled to March 28, 2024 at 6PM. Agenda to follow.

7. HCHH Work Plan Update

Lori Hirshfield, John Haffner, Jennifer Kravitz and Maggie Burnett met on January 23, 2024 to discuss potential 2024 HCHH work plan items based on the HCHH's previous discussions. They focused on the following topics for further discussion at the February HCHH meeting.

- Collaborate with Norwich, VT Affordable Housing Subcommittee.
- Promote HomeShare VT with an information session in Hartford similar to the event held in Woodstock.
- Create a rental unit registry.
- Work with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission Brownfields Advisory Committee to host a charrette to gather more knowledge about development on and around Brownfields sites.
- Develop a stronger housing presence on the Town of Hartford website.
- Research low-interest loans for technical assistance.
- Assist with organizing another Home Creators Expo in June.

The Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee was contacted and will join the February 15th HCHH meeting to discuss common goals and possible collaboration.

John reached out to the Bugbee Center and HomeShare VT and has a tentative date of April 24th for a HomeShare informational session at the Bugbee Center. HomeShare VT will provide the content, the Bugbee Senior Center will provide the venue and HCHH will promote the event.

John also attended an initial planning meeting for the 2024 Home Creator Expo, in his capacity with Vital Communities. This is the second annual Expo and will be held again at the Hartford Area Career and Technical Center; a date has not been confirmed. Lori said there is a lot going on with the development of affordable housing in Hartford and looks forward to the Expo providing updates and opportunities for all who participate.

Dan agreed to begin gathering ideas for what we would like to see on the Town's website. Lori added that the recent filling of the department's Administrative Assistant position, the website update will be a focus.

8. Town Plan Housing Chapter Update

Lori reported that a Steering Committee meeting will be scheduled in March along with one more community meeting to gather final input before the formal adoption process of the Town Plan Housing Chapter begins. The By-laws Modernization project to increase opportunities for housing development in Hartford also in process. HCHH can help engage the public in these discussions.

9. News from Committee Members

Ally mentioned the distinction between subcommittees and working groups.

Ally announced that Commissioner Alex Farrell will be sharing remarks on housing-related programs and funding opportunities on Tuesday, February 20th at 6:30 at the Hartford Selectboard meeting.

Ally also met with Hartford Town Manager John Haverstock, Selectboard member Kim Souza, and former Ad Hoc Committee on Emergency Shelter member Simon Dennis concerning the use of RVs for emergency shelters for the unhoused. While the idea has merit, there are many obstacles including state and town ordinances, safety standards, sanitation, potable water, and access to transportation. The question was raised about how other communities are grappling with this issue.

Lori shared that the Town has hired a national consultant to assist the Town in the update of the Economic Development Section of the Town Plan. The Town and consultant are in the process of planning public outreach including focus group and community meetings in March. HCHH should be on the lookout for information to disseminate to the public.

10. Joint Meeting with Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee

At 7:00 PM, members of the Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee (Jeff Lubell, Paul Manganiello, Jeff Goodrich, Brian Loeb, Creigh Moffatt) joined to discuss common goals and potential collaboration on affordable housing initiatives. Jeff Lubell began by listing some issues their group is currently addressing:

- Reviewing town-owned land
- ADU development
- Zoning modifications
- Educating the public
- Finding solutions to Norwich's wastewater obstacles
- Looking for collaborations with Hartford and Hanover

It was acknowledged that there are many areas where Norwich and Hartford can collaborate:

- Process for auditing town land
- Continuing to work on a shared sewer and water system
- Consider land usage along Norwich/Hartford town line
- Local low-interest loan program
- Regulating affordability
- ADU incentive program
- Deregulation of local zoning
- Support continued development of Home Creator Expo

Lori described a new approach to housing development which is showing signs of success where private sector developers construct multifamily units and then a non-profit housing entity buys the project once it is completed. This approach streamlines the process and eliminates some federal and state regulations which reduce development costs and increases the number of units being development given limited capacity with non-profit housing development entities to do it all. Presently, this approach is being done in Hartford, and is supported by the State.

Jeff Lubell discussed his interest in modular building with the notion of bringing a modular manufacturer to Vermont. While this idea holds promise for surrounding towns, Norwich will continue to struggle to take advantage of many affordable housing initiatives because of its water issues. Norwich suggested that Hartford and Norwich explore work together to modify State regulations on wastewater and modular development.

The members of the Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee agreed to support the Home Creators Expo with the potential addition of a workshop on septic issues. Other workshops would include financial assistance and landlord/tenant concerns. The two Committees agreed to continue to meet in the future on these and other housing topics.

11. HomeShare Vermont Event April 24

See #7 above.

12. Housing Development Update

Lori reported that nothing significant had advanced since our last meeting.

13. Adjourn Meeting

Ally Tufenkjian made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dan Nott seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting ended at 8:10 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 (through 9/18/2025)

Maggie Burnett (through 12/11/25)

Ally Tufenkjian, Selectboard Liaison

Vacant Position

Lori Hirshfield, Staff Liaison