

Hartford Committee on Housing and Homelessness
June 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Members Present: John Haffner (Chair), Jennifer Kravitz (Vice-Chair) Dan Nott (remote), , Maggie Burnett, Brandon Smith (Selectboard Liaison); Lori Hirshfield (staff)

Members Absent: Nancy Trottier

1. Call Meeting to Order

John Haffner called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM and read the script regarding the meeting being hybrid with in-person and remote access.

2. HCHH Member to do Meeting Minutes

Brandon Smith 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 May 30, 2024 Committee Meeting Minutes

There were no changes to the Minutes. Jen Kravitz made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and Maggie Burnette seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

6. Continue Discussion on Hartford Rental Registry

John Hafner reported that he had invited Deb Colt from the State Landlord Group working with the Haven to share her knowledge about the rental situation in the area and her knowledge of the rental situation in Hartford. Unfortunately, she recently left that position. Joh will reach out to the haven to see who else may be a contact person.

There was a discussion about the objectives of a registry for Hartford. Jen shared some information she found on-line (Policy Link) focused reasons and benefits. This led to a discussion on identifying property owners; types and availability of housing; if issues with compliance of regulations; identifying households at risk; health and safety; outreach; and support services. The was discussion about the potential of large companies operating networks of rentals that may be less familiar with Vermont tenant-landlord rules and responsibilities.

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The Committee members reviewed the reasons discussed at the April meeting. These were: having clearer information on the number of short-term and long-term rentals; availability; building a database when seeking housing, and when looking at expanding the availability of

housing. Dan reminded the Committee members about the suggestion to call it a “Rental Directory” instead of a “Rental Registry”.

Brandon brought up the recent enforcement actions by the U.S. FTC and FBI against software platform “RealPage where the FTC accused RealPage of price fixing via algorithm. and the FBI in June raided RealPage’s offices. Brandon committed to asking the state if it has data on RealPage use in Vermont and/or in Hartford. There was discussion about the role of enforcement within the context of a Rental Directory. The general consensus was it would be helpful to know if the state had concerns about price fixing, but it is not the purpose for initiating the Directory. Rather collecting information would be focused on collecting more specific information of the rental housing stock.

There also was discussion about whether registration with the Rental Directory should be mandatory or voluntary. All agreed it should be required. It was suggested that property owners who are renting out rooms in the house in which they live - essentially has housemates, might be voluntary. There also was discussion about having input from landlords to understand their perspective about a directory.

The Committee focused on next steps over the next month so a more definitive structure could be discussed/ agreed upon at the July Committee meeting. Lori committed to gather example formats of other rental registries around Vermont /New England; existing sources for rental rate information; and example Ordinances. John suggested Committee “homework to brainstorm about: the purpose(s)/ goals of the directory; why they’re worthwhile; and how to reach them via policy. He added it is important that the Committee have internal agreement about all this before doing outreach on the concept of a Rental Directory. Dan, Jen, Maggie and Lori will meet on Tuesday July 2nd to draft some responses to these questions for the July Committee meeting.

7. Continue Collaboration with Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee

John reported on his conversation with Jeff Label from the Norwich Affordable Housing Subcommittee as a follow-up to the HCHH meeting with the Subcommittee this past April. One of the topics they touched on was looking into extension of Hartford water and sewer systems into Norwich along Route 5 to support housing for the region. There was a brief discussion about previous dialogue between Hartford and the Norwich School system which was interested in the infrastructure extension to address septic issues at the elementary school. That extension also could have increased an opportunity to increase housing in Norwich. John added that that the Norwich Housing Subcommittee is interested in pursuing some new conversations between Hartford and Norwich Municipal Offices.

Lori noted that part of the previous conversations identified the need to understand the current capacity of the Hartford’s system to support future development in Hartford, and the capacity that Norwich would be seeking. It was agreed that Lori would enquire with Dept of Public Works as to the current capacity of the system and when they would be approaching the capacity that warrants engineers’ analysis. John will reconnect with Jeff Lubel to see if the Norwich selectboard already has expressed an interest in such a connection. Lori recommended that the HCHH discuss with Hartford’s Town Manager and Selectboard their interest in exploring infrastructure support for regional housing before pursuing further discussions with Norwich.

8. Continue to Discuss Solutions for the Unhoused Community

Brandon committed to request data from the PD on interaction with the unhoused population, assuming this is somewhat readily available

9. Update on Town Website Page on Housing

Lori reported that she has informed her Admin Assistant is able to work with Dan to put together some drafts.

10. News from Committee Members

John and Lori reported on the successful Home Creators Expo on July 1st coordinated by Vital Communities, TRORC and Town of Hartford. In response to an inquiry, Lori and John will send to the Committee contacts for modular housing development companies.

11. Adjourn Meeting

Jen made motion to adjourn the meeting and Maggie seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting ended at 7:37p.m.

Committee Members

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)

Brandon Smith, Selectboard Liaison

Vacant Position

Lori Hirshfield, Staff Liaison