

NOTES

Shelburne Housing Committee
Monday, June 6, 2022

Attendees:

Pam Brangan, Julie Gaboriault, Joyce George, Maria McClellan, Peg Rosenau

Absent:

Julie Gaboriault

Guests:

Bart Frisbie, Mark Capeless

1. Pam called the meeting to order.
2. Agenda approved
3. May 2nd minutes approved -- Maria moved approval. Joyce second.
4. Committee Operating Procedures
 - Discussion about how to hold hybrid meetings where some are present and others are virtual -- discussion postponed until all committee members present.
 - Discussion never happened because all attendees were in person.
5. Meeting is open to the Public
 - Open meeting law applies to this committee. Committee should not have discussions via email. It is fine for a committee member to provide a summary of a meeting attended, but any discussion about the meeting summary should happen during Housing Committee meeting, not via email.
6. Committee Roles --
 - Pam invited committee members to think about the chair, vice chair and secretary roles on the committee.
7. Special Guest - Bart Frisbie, Sterling Homes Developer
 - INTRO COMMENTS: Bart shared his experience as a developer in Shelburne: He has been a developer for many years. Has developed Deer Run, Stonegate, Boulder Hill, Gardenside (in development now), & Mill River. Been around Shelburne for a long time. Passionate about building. Affordable housing is appropriate and needed, and it's very, very difficult. It's a huge challenge that he believes too often towns try to tell developers: "You fix it." If that is the case, it won't happen. Developers have very little power. Economics dictate that developers must make money: the bank won't loan money if we don't make money. If developers are told that a certain # number of houses in a development must be affordable, then the cost will pass to the rest of the homeowners. If in fact workforce housing or affordable housing is something that the town feels is necessary for the community, then all town taxpayers must be part of it. Bart has long thought that the cost of housing in Vermont is way too expensive. There are so many rules and regulations that exacerbate the problem. There's no simple fix. It's all incremental steps. The land, the permits, cost of energy -- all of the things that factor into the final cost of the house. The biggest challenge is land. If you fly into Burlington, VT, you are 30

seconds out from landing at the airport before you see concentrated housing. There's a lot of land, but it's not necessarily accessible to build on. Public water, public sewer make a huge difference. Permits are part of it. At the Gardenside Development: each lot has hard costs in excess of \$100,000 -- buying the land, getting the permits, building the infrastructure, putting in the roads.... Bart has to absorb the cost of all of that before even building the house.

- **QUESTION:** Can you speak to Shelburne building rules?
- **ANSWER:** Bart: Every project seems to be different. When you design roads and sidewalks, often times it's the Fire and Highway Dept who make final decisions about roads and other components, and sometimes those decisions have ripple effects that drive up the cost of building.
- **QUESTION:** What would be helpful?
- **ANSWER:** Bart: One idea is that affordability needs to be made a priority by the town. The Town needs to decide and balance the need for affordability with the Fire Dept & Highway Safety needs, Public Works needs, and other committee's requests. Affordability criteria hasn't had the prominence it deserves. We all want Workforce Housing. We all want affordable housing. My workers drive a long way because they can't afford to live here. We're all in this together. Find a piece of land that the town owns and if the town could donate the land for development, that would be helpful, or bring in a donor. We're the builder for the development in Hinesburg where the land has been donated by private philanthropist (former owner of NRG Systems) in collaboration with Champlain Housing Trust. CHT will build 100 mixed-income homes on the donated land. 100 units of housing total: 60 will build affordable, and in collaboration with CHT, they would be part of a shared equity program: 20 that will be built by Habitat for Humanity: An additional 20 homes will be built at market rate, built by Sterling Homes. Bart wonders if there a similar opportunity for land to be donated in Shelburne?
- **QUESTION:** Comments on Inclusionary Zoning?
- **ANSWER:** The concept is wonderful, but in practice it is problematic. Who is going to absorb cost of the 10% or 20% of affordable homes that must be below market rate? The price of the remaining market rate homes will have to subsidize the unmet costs of the affordable homes. If we want affordable/workforce housing, how about the Town waives the building fees? The town needs to be part of the solution.
- **QUESTION:** What's your experience with neighbors?
- **ANSWER:** When I consider building, I look at the neighbors. Nobody wants the woods to go away. Neighbors have a lot of credence with DRB and can drag process out that adds thousands and thousands of dollars to the project. If you have a plot of land and you want to go to the maximum density and the neighbors are going to fight you, the DRB is probably going to squirm. We'll spend more time because town doesn't like confrontation and wants everyone to be happy. Developer winds up being the "monkey in the middle." The rules may allow you to build X number of units, but it often doesn't work out that the developer can either get approval or fit the X number of units.

- QUESTION: How do you decide multi-family vs. single-family?
 - ANSWER: It costs about the same amount to build a 2-family vs. two single-family houses, but the difference is the cost of the land. What we build has a lot to do with the how much developing the land will cost me based on the town's rules.
 - Pam commented on the limited role of Shelburne Housing Committee -- advisory only -- and she shared that the new Town Planner Adele Gravitz is trying to connect the dots between the Shelburne Housing Committee and the work of all of the other committees so we can all understand the bigger picture. Pam shared that the Shelburne Housing Committee is downstream from decisions made about housing developments. Bart is supportive of Shelburne trying to connect the dots so that affordable housing is prioritized at the highest levels.
 - QUESTION: When you approach a project, how do you decide the size of the homes? There's a demand for smaller, more efficient homes that might even be 1200-square-foot homes, i.e. for retirees and smaller families. How do you decide? Could you fit more homes if they were smaller?
 - ANSWER: The smaller the lot, the more comfortable a small house fits on it. If the lot is bigger, the buying market wants to put something bigger on it. Lots on Webster Road are smaller -- appx. 12,000 square feet lots. But the people add size to the house to get what they want while fitting into their budget. The houses keep getting bigger. Covid has impacted what people want in their home.. After Covid, people want offices to work at home.
 - QUESTION: Have you done anything with form-based code in any town?
 - ANSWER: No. We've been working in South Village in South Burlington for many years. It doesn't have form-based code but the DRB took more control of the design. Building housing there, we have to get our designs approved by multiple committees/boards.
 - BART FINAL COMMENTS? Developers like predictability. We need to know how much things are going to cost and how long permitting is going to take, so we can plan and budget. We need a more predictable process. We like to know we can get through the process in a predictable amount of time. It's heartwarming to build for people who have never owned a house. But it's hard to make that happen.
 - THANK YOU: Pam thanked Bart for coming and speaking with the committee. She said she's excited to take some of this information to the Shelburne Planning Commission on Thursday night.
8. Recent housing activity -- we ran out of time for this
 9. Other Business -- Planning Commission meeting on Thursday night. The Committee is invited, and Pam will speak.

Next meeting: Monday, August 1st