



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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NEW LONDON HOUSING COMMISSION
September 7, 2022, 6:00PM
SAU – Professional Development Center

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Nichols, Marilyn Kidder, Michael Quinn, Randy Foose, Tom Vannatta

MEMBERS ABSENT: Amy Kaplan, Steve Theroux, Winfried Feneberg

OTHERS PRESENT: Nancy Rollins, Selectman, Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator, Mark Fougere, Ellen Hender, John Haffner, Ann Bedard

Peter Nichols called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Review of Minutes – July 11, 2022

IT WAS MOVED (Michael Quinn) AND SECONDED (Randy Foose) to accept the minutes from the July 11, 2022 meeting. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED. Tom Vannatta and Randy Foose abstained from the vote.

Vital Communities: John Haffner, Ellen Hender

Chair Nichols introduced John Haffner and Ellen Hender from Vital Communities and stated that they are here tonight to share with us what Vital Communities is, what they do and how we can work together. There is also an opportunity to participate in a grant and they will provide the details around that.

John Haffner is a housing and transportation program manager at Vital Communities. Vital Communities is a region wide, non-profit organization that convenes municipalities, community-based organizations and community members themselves around exploring equitable solutions to the problems that face the Upper Region. Of those problems, housing is one of the major challenges they are facing as a community. He and Ms. Hender are working with partners across the region to think about ways to address the affordability and availability crisis in housing in the upper valley communities. This is being done in a variety of ways including zoning reform and land use regulatory reform to help to spur development of affordable housing. They also explore different approaches to housing development such as accessory dwelling units, home sharing options, cottage clusters and duplexes.

Ellen Hender shared that an important part of their work is supporting the local housing groups throughout the upper valley.

Mr. Haffner noted that some of the projects they are involved in include working with the city of Lebanon and the town of Hartford on the joint housing discussion forum to create a vision of what housing might look like in partnership with those two communities. They are also trying to do this

on a region wide basis and partnering with Keys to the Valley who has been a strong partner for their housing work in the past and will be hosting a summit. This will be an opportunity for different housing groups to share successes, challenges and projects they are working on. It would also be a way to receive guidance and attend specific content workshops provided by Keys to the Valley staff.

Kearsarge Community Housing Navigator Grant

Mr. Haffner stated the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning commission (UVLSRPC) and Vital Communities are exploring pursuing a community housing navigator grant. These are funds made available through the InvestNH funds. Some of these funds are going towards direct construction and demolition projects to make room for housing and some of the funds are being reserved for municipalities to do land use regulatory reform and community engagement work. A section of that money is being reserved to hire six housing navigators throughout the state. They will be called community health navigators and their role would be to help guide and support community engagement efforts including outreach, forums and providing technical assistance.

Mr. Haffner is asking if New London has interest in sharing this resource with surrounding towns. Chair Rollins shared that she believes there needs to be a regional answer to workforce housing. No one town or community is going to solve it and it needs to be shared regional responsibility. We also need to figure out what the goal is and what percent of housing should be considered workforce housing. Mr. Haffner responded that the intent of the community navigator is to have some kind of regulatory reform while acknowledging that the community needs to be supportive of it and have buy in. As a part of this position, the community navigator would explore language to be put into town plans that build on the workforce housing law but set strategic goals that are much more specifically laid out.

The grant submission deadline is September 30, 2022. The UVLSRPC along with Vital Communities would be partners in submitting the grant. Ideally the position would be filled quickly but it could take a few months to fill and would be for a two year period. They don't want to have more than four communities and they have already reached out to Sunapee, Wilmot and Newbury. Sunapee and Wilmot have agreed to move forward so they are putting together an application. If New London is interested they would need to let them know soon.

IT WAS MOVED (Randy Foose) AND SECONDED (Tom Vannatta) to recommend participation to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED. Michael Quinn abstained from the vote.

Developer Panel

Chair Nichols stated the Developer panel discussion has been scheduled for September 14, 2022 at 6:00pm at the SAU – Professional Development Center. Marilyn Kidder and Amy Kaplan worked on getting the advertisements into the Shopper and the *Intertown Record*. They have also been working on the questions that will be used to interview the panelists. Information has been posted on the town website and YCN will be taping it as well.

Chair Nichols asked if there were any groups that haven't been reached, even with the advertising they have done. Tom Vannatta suggested posting information in public facility areas such as the library, post office, transfer station, Hannaford and other organizations. Chair Nichols noted that some other suggestions might be to NH executive councilor Joe Kenny, churches, Kearsarge Housing Commission, UVLSRPC, rotary and the Chamber of commerce.

Chair Nichols stated at the last panel discussion at Wheeler Hall there was good ambiance, and the Professional Development Center has a different atmosphere. He would like to optimize the venue seating arrangement so everyone feels comfortable. Physical things that could be done would be to move the flags and swing tables to change the orientation so it faces towards the corner of the room. Others suggested table cloths and flower arrangements.

NH Municipal Grants Update

Mark Fougere and Michael Quinn have been working keeping an eye out for funding from InvestNH. Mr. Fougere reported that this has to do with allocation of money to communities that approve a workforce housing projects. The guidelines are out and it is \$10,000 per affordable unit that is approved by the community and there is a cap of 1 million dollars per project and 1 million dollars per municipality. The permits have to be applied for after February of this year and have to be issued within 6 months of application and this includes all permits. This is a very aggressive timeframe for an applicant, and it would be a challenge to meet that. Projects must be ready for occupancy by May, 2024 and again that is aggressive. The projects must be no smaller than three new affordable units but there are no restrictions for the use of funds. The affordable units must remain affordable for no less than five years.

2024 NLHC Annual Budget Request

Chair Nichols stated the annual budget request needs to be submitted for FY2024. These funds would be available for July 1, 2023. Although it is hard to speculate what needs there will be that far in advance, Chair Nichols anticipates there will be a need for more assistance and possibly the continuation of hiring consultants. He suggested \$15,000 per year plus the cost of administrative support.

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Nichols) AND SECONDED (Michael Quinn) that the commission approve the request of \$15,000 plus administrative costs for the annual budget of 2024 for the New London Housing Commission. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

New Business

Marilyn Kidder shared that in speaking with people it would be helpful to define what "affordable" means so it is clear. Chair Nichols responded that Nancy Rollins had suggested in an earlier meeting that the commission develop a cheat sheet to build definitions and knowledge to clarify this information.

People also have concerns about the impact workforce housing has on the school district. Mark Fougere commented that he has done a number of impact reports related to different projects and although everyone thinks these units will have a lot of children that is not usually the case. The whole reason for workforce housing is to support families, and that includes children but statistics show the number of children is usually low. Another concern was that retirement age people would fill these

units and workforce people would not be able to rent them. Although this would negate the purpose of workforce housing you can't discriminate based on age.

Future Meetings:

Future meeting dates:
September 14th (panel discussion)
September 21st 6:00-8:00pm
September 28th 6:00 – 8:00pm

**IT WAS MOVED (Randy Foose) AND SECONDED (Michael Quinn) to adjourn the meeting.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:27PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson

Recording Secretary
Town of New London