

Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting
Thursday, November 16th, 2023 | 6:00-8:00 pm
Steele Community Room (28 N. Main St.)

MINUTES:

Attendees: Joe Camaratta, Chris Balzano, Kane Sweeney, Madeleine Young, & Mary Koen

Called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm

Review agenda:

No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and approve minutes from the 10/19/2023 task force meeting

The Members of the Task Force reviewed and approved the minutes from the October 19th, 2023 Meeting. Joe made a motion to accept the minutes and Mary seconded the motion, none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on 51 S Main Street / 35 Foundry St

- 51 S Main street passed.
- Case study: Chris met with the contractor who purchased 35 Foundry St. In order to build housing here, the contractor would likely need funding assistance - but they are open to pursuing housing (as well as other options). Chris is hoping to have the contractor attend a HTF (Housing Task Force) meeting for perspective.
 - As a HTF do we want to help this contractor market to a developer? Do we have this authority as a HTF? This could be risky. What is this process?
 - This could help us learn about how to present future housing.
 - What specific types of housing do we want to propose for the vacant lots/renovations? Accessibility? Senior housing?
 - Density in housing often leads to accessibility features.
 - Revisiting: We still just need housing of any type.
 - We are limited in space so we should still be deliberate.

Relevant Task for Updates

- Recommendation for registry - looking to have this done by January?
 - STH (short term rentals) are reeling in far more income for landlords per month (~\$5,000/mo) than LTR (~\$1,000-3,000)
- Dec 6th or 7th is second informational open for Phase 1 zoning update with the Planning Commission
 - We should pay attention to Conservation

Update on New member recruiting

- New member going to Select Board for approval on Monday
 - Landlord, builder, and STR owner
- Would like to find 1-3 more people. Business owner? Someone involved in tourism? VSEA representative?

Update on on-going Initiatives

- Short term rentals (Kane, Madeleine, Joe) - collect additional data on the actual makeup of the STRs in Waterbury that are on the market, and collect comparisons to nearby

- communities. Make recommendations of regulations or rules that the Select Board may enact. (3 months)
- Create affordable guidelines for new housing projects based on income of current and future Waterbury residents (Chris, Alyssa, Eliza).
 - Trying to define “affordability” based on Waterbury residents, but we do not know exactly who the demographic is yet.
 - Should we include “accessibility”
 - “Create guidelines for new housing projects based on Waterbury’s housing needs”?
 - This can link to incentives for proper housing, rather than just townhouses.
 - Future Growth study - looks at water and sewer capabilities
 - “Create guidelines to make a recommendation to future developers on new housing projects based on Waterbury’s housing needs”
 - Discussion to be continued at the next meeting.
 - Best practices for VT communities considering regulation of short-term rental homes
 - Identify gaps
 - Should we reconsider including ADUs in our data?
 - We should brainstorm incentivizing having the ADU as a long term rental to be more appealing to owner than STR.
 - We compared STR data from Richmond, Waitsfield, Warren, etc. compared to Waterbury.
 - Can we look at towns near ski resorts, towns in southern VT?
 - Is it corporate buyers on STRs? Out of state buyers?
 - Joe is going to try to collect this data from the grand list.
 - 162 STR units in Waterbury as of September 2023
 - Short term rentals on second homes - can we tax this differently/incentivize not having “jackolantern” housing?
 - Exercise on choosing STR objectives. Joe took a poll to order our objectives with results:
 - 1. Maximize the availability of housing options by ensuring that no long-term rental properties are converted into short-term rentals
 - 2. Reduce likelihood of investors from out of the area from purchasing homes for short-term rentals that would otherwise be critical elements of the local housing
 - 3. Ensure that short-term rentals are taxed in the same way as traditional lodging providers to ensure a level playing field and maintain local service
 - Give residents the option to utilize their properties to generate extra income from short-term rentals as long as all other mentioned policy objectives are
 - Strategies
 - PDF from Joe
 - Prevent conversion of LTR to STR, Rollback Conversions, Leverage Conversions

Next Meeting:

- Draft up possible regulations/incentives for Waterbury to meet the objectives voted on above.
- Everyone on zoom because Joe will be out of time

Motion to adjourn at 8:10