

Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting
Thursday, December 21st, 2023 | 6:00-8:00 pm
Zoom meeting

MINUTES:

Attendees: Joe Camaratta, Chris Balzano, Kane Sweeney, Madeleine Young, Mary Ellen Lamson, Alyssa Johnson, Eliza Novick-Smith, Owen Sette-Ducati, & Mary Koen

Called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm

Update on New member recruiting:

Welcome: Mary Ellen (Em) Lamson & Owen Sette-Ducati

- We would like to welcome a business owner into the last vacant spot in the committee.

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 16th, 2023 Meeting. Joe made a motion to accept the minutes and Eliza seconded the motion, none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

Review agenda:

No changes were made to the agenda.

Relevant Task force Updates

- Possible location to look at to subdivide for housing: High St/Armory ave - old municipal garage 3 acre lot. Parking concerns. Subdivide ½ acre possibly. If viable, HTF may be helpful to provide input.

Update on on-going Initiatives

- Motion from Waterbury Housing Task Force from September 2023. January 20th for presentation.
 - Collect additional data on the actual makeup of the short-term rentals 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.
- Why talk about Short Term Housing (STH)?
 - Short term Housing Definition:
 - Rental for less than one calendar month (or less than 30 days) of an entire housing unit.
 - Does not include room rented out in already occupied home
 - Does not include seasonal rental
 - Includes houses, apartments, and ADUs
 - Notable STR trends:

- Waterbury: Seasonal housing/second homes have increased about 100 units in past 5 years
- Waterbury: **STR increased 58% from pre-pandemic levels**, but still only of 7% total housing
- Waterbury: 30% increase in average monthly revenue of a STR
 - More people want to come to Waterbury, and are willing to pay more
 - Em states that in her STR experience, folks prefer to rent a house setting so that they can cook at home, and spend money elsewhere in the community.
 - Might be worth looking at which types of STRs people actually prefer to rent
- Lamoille County: 162 of STRs could be used as a Long Term Rental (LTR). 13 STRs could go back to a LTRs, and 54 could convert to LTRs.
- Ludlow, Killington, Plymouth, Stowe, Woodstock, etc: Rental units account for less than 20% of housing in VT towns pursuing STR regulations (except Morristown).
 - Waterbury is 31% rentals, with 7% STR.
 - Ski town adjacent
- Priority short-term policy objectives for the Housing Task Force:
 - 1) Maximize the availability of housing options by ensuring that limited 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 supply
 - 3a) 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 met
 - 3b) 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 jobs.
- Mary notes that we may be assuming STRs are a negative
 - Are STR taking away from LTR market? We cannot gather this data.
 - Balance is important.
 - Not a lot of data showing LTR converted to STR in Waterbury. Can we structure regulations in direction way that does not allow LTR conversions to STR (like other ski adjacent towns who have lost LTR rental stock).
 - Housing includes both owning and renting.
 - How can we be proactive in a tourism town?
 - STR are not fundamental problem in housing. We do not want to be like NYC and rid completely of STR - need to approach differently.
 - STR are not a bad thing especially with tourist income. Looking for incentives to create LTR for community, and not penalize STR. However

we right now we are focusing on need to gather the data on STR first to know.

- Why regulate STR regulation/registry? Are there regulations/registries on LTR?
- We do worry about turning into a “Jack-o-lantern neighborhood”
- We are losing some housing stock based on flooding habitability
- Important to state to the Select Board that the Task Force’s primary objective is not STR. We need to make it known that we are **not** against the STR but are presenting the information because we have been tasked to do so in the goal of adding housing in Waterbury.
- Strategies for managing STR
 - Prevent conversion of LTR to STR
 - Rollback conversions back to LTR
 - Leverage conversions by taxing/adding fee to invest back into community
 - Possible approaches:
 - Registry/yearly fee to go for greater good of housing?
 - Must be clear with what the benefit is. Provides a tool for the town to make informed decisions without being intrusive.
 - Control over what people are doing in their homes is concerning.
 - Registry is to gather data, not enforce rules or restrict. Both for LTR and STR.
 - Without data, we cannot make informed decisions.
 - Data is good for Select board - STR topic comes up often and having data to present to the public will help.
 - Task force’s job is to put options/recommendations on table, but not create the policy.
 - Recommend a registry without a fee, and only show the Select board the policy objectives that other towns have used.
- **Vote for who would like to recommend a registry to the Select Board (without restrictions or fees).**
 - 6 in favor. 2 against.
 - Should this be included in zoning rather? STR are not yet fully defined in zoning (besides needing to be in residential zoned areas) and will need to be further defined in the near future.
 - Should include both LTR and STR in the registry?
 - Should we define other/traveling nurse housing differently?
 - Frequently traveling nurses will sublet and often
- **Chris makes a motion that the registry that we recommend is in support to apply to all rentals (long term, short term, other) in all of Waterbury (Historic Village, Center, etc.). Madeleine seconds the motion.**

Next Meeting:

- What did we accomplish in 2023?
- What do we want to accomplish in 2024
- Keep in mind Housing Task Force Goals:
 - Ensure the availability of safe, decent and affordable housing for all current and future Waterbury residents.
 - Create new housing in locations that maintain the integrity of neighborhoods while increasing density, respecting the natural environment, and minimizing the need for infrastructure improvements.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.