

Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting **Thursday, April 16, 2026 | 6:00-8:00 pm**

Present: Billy Vidor, Joe Camaratta, Chris Balzano, Jess Neubelt (acting Secretary), Sandy Sabin, Skip Flanders, Gretchen Schissel, Roger Clapp (representing RW), Cheryl Casey.

Not Present: Eliza Novick-Smith

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:01

Sandy moved to approve minutes; Billy seconded; motion approved by unanimous vote

VCDA Conference Takeaways; Joe attended

- Morning was state initiatives; afternoon was state initiatives + others
- 802 Homes for All design catalog - town survey launching in May re: feedback on designs vis a vis local zoning codes, final catalog launched in December
 - The idea is that then, if Waterbury was on board with the designs, then we would adopt them in our bylaws or perhaps as a design overlay district. Would still require administrative approval
- VT is studying a landbank - this is intended to help clear title, hold land that the state doesn't want to leave up to chance, etc. Unclear how much that'll help Waterbury.
- training for small-scale developers - hosted/hosting 4 trainings across the state through this out-of-state infill org
- CHIP policy framework - needs to get started by the SB, though they may delegate that to Planning Commission or ourselves
 - The increment needs to be large enough to be worthwhile, so this is likely not going to fund a single-family house - the work just wouldn't be worth it.
 - Joe proposes that we all either watch a training or we invite VLCT to a meeting
 - VLCT is going to present to the Selectboard for 10-30 minutes, and we need to focus that conversation on the policy framework
 - Possibility of a "retreat" where PC/HTF/SB/EFUD all come to a training?
- "Soft stuff" creates the biggest barrier to housing - community acceptance/resistance, growing the developer pipeline, etc

Selectboard Meeting Schedule

- New SB is shifting their approach to engagement with town commissions. Instead of just relying on liaison SB members in each group, these commissions will each come to the SB 3x/year.
- Topics to discuss include:
 - June - CHIP Policy Framework, Waterbury Housing Improvement Program 2.0
 - October - Employee survey results; in-fill opportunities/town-owned properties
 - January - budget items: cost for a study proposal to evaluate growth areas and 2027 funds for Waterbury Housing Reserve fund

- Waiting until January is too late for the SB to hear about a budget request, so perhaps we get them a number earlier and then come to this meeting to present the idea and make the case.
 - \$75k in the budget from 2025, nothing new allocated this year; will we want anything allocated next year and if so, this is our chance to discuss
 - Parking lot topics
 - Rental registry progress
 - Define, document, communicate a clear and predictable pathway from concept to permit for common housing project types
 - Keeping CHIP fresh in SB minds - bring it up at each session
- What kind of CHIP training does the Housing Task Force/Selectboard/Planning Commission/town staff need?
 - Who needs to actually know the real details, not every SB or PC member needs to be in the weeds
 - Discussion of the pros/cons. Are developers only one benefitting from this? No - the idea is that there's a but/for test for private developers who would not otherwise be building a given project. OR the town is getting affordable housing as the added benefit.
 - Joe to reach out to Bonnie to ask for a one-hour video training that we all join together if we can or otherwise watch remotely. Do this before the June 16th SB meeting.
- Employee survey
 - Roger asks whether HTF would have reservations about sharing the results of the survey early in order to spur even more participation. Joe cautions that releasing without any context may result in things being misinterpreted so just wants to take a look to make sure things make sense on their own

Waterbury Housing Improvement Program 2.0

- After Joe posted on FPF and Lisa published in Roundabout, Downstreet got three more people reaching out to ask about it and one application already submitted.
- Current program is for grants up to \$30k to create or add an ADU with 5 years of affordability with rents at or below 110% and rents at or below 100% Fair Market Rents
- Last month we discussed whether to continue this program next year or propose something new. Generally agreed that we should maintain the existing program but add the option to renovate units as well.
- In a recent SB meeting, Chris Viens suggested following VHIP 2.0 rehab guidelines. Joe shared those VHIP2.0 guidelines to the task force. Focuses on major improvements like weatherization, code repair, accessibility improvements, roofing, HVAC and structure. ie not just cosmetic. Task force likes these focus.
- Discussion of whether we should cover weatherization or forward folks to Efficiency VT for tapping their funds. Agreed that the benefits outweigh the costs and weatherization is key; also something that Waterbury falls behind the region on.

- How can we develop program materials that recommend applicants go to Efficiency Vermont for partial work?
- What's the right funding amount? Joe to dig into the past VHIP and WHIP applicants to see what requests tend to be.
- Have our funding window available when VHIP is not available.
- To do:
 - Figure out how to direct folks to EVT for cost sharing on weatherization
 - Figure out what eligibility limits should be for rehab applications vs new construction/new unit applications. We agree it should be less

Infill Opportunities

- Joe has spoken with three developers about site selection: Habitat for Humanity, Frog Hollow Development, and one other. Worked to develop two typologies that would work within zoning. Brought these back to the developers, who agreed with the approach and said to keep going.
- Dana Allen has created a GIS tool that helps to filter different types of buildable lots. Joe used that tool to display information in Google Earth. Some town-owned sites:
 - Stanley Wasson of course, Railroad & Stowe Streets, behind library/community gardens, land behind the state armory. rec area by tennis courts etc
 - Vacant sites mostly along Route 2 that flood...
 - Vacant sites, ie along Batchelder St with large lots, IF the owners are interested
 - Large parcels outside of Phase I bylaws that still have or are adjacent to water/sewer. EFUD has identified a couple.
 - What are town's policies around disposition of property; what can SB decide and what goes to voters? If there isn't a policy, perhaps one is needed and would make this process easier.
- Next steps to get ready for October SB Meeting
 - Create shortlist of properties:
 - Use EFUD water meter readings to identify low users that may indicate vacant or underutilized lots
 - Use these mapping programs to help identify vacant lots
 - RW has some intel on underutilized vacant commercial spaces (ie above Cask and Cork)
 - Outreach
 - Engage SB/town staff
 - Engage developers and private property owners

Employee Survey (presented by Gretchen with RW)

- Ran for 2 weeks, received 284 responses. Significant number of state employees, half of Ivy Computers employees
- 133 indicating an interest in moving in the next 3-5 years, with two-thirds indicating interest in moving within 30-minutes of Waterbury and 25% moving to Waterbury

- About 50/50 split between folks who wanted to rent vs own
 - Rental max - most folks needing under \$2k. 45% of folks indicating desire to rent are looking for townhomes/SFH/duplexes as opposed to multifamily units or ADUs
 - Ownership max - plurality of folks needing under \$300k
- Results seem to suggest that people don't necessarily want to live within Waterbury, rather within 30-minutes. But this could be informed by the state employee mandate to be here 5 days a week and resistance to that; ideas of Waterbury as too floodprone; ideas of Waterbury as too expensive
- Interest in continuing to get responses - from private employers in particular, like B&J's, CorePower, Main Street businesses, trades/builders, etc. Is there a notable difference between state employees and private employees.

Motion to Adjourn from Skip; Sandy seconded