

## Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

11/14/2019

Meeting called to order at 7:07.

Members present: Annie Rowell, Dave Rowell, Gordon Waterhouse, Rudy Chase, Emily Maclure, Lucas Schulz, Linda Ramsdell, Farley Brown.

Dave Rowell moved to pass the minutes, Annie Rowell seconded. The minutes passed unanimously.

In a continuation of the effort to learn more about affordable housing, Dave Rowell reported on his conversation with Ken Harvey:

Ken Harvey created the Sterling Ridge development intended to be affordable for people 55 and over.

The development is on a 77 acre parcel in Johnson.

The Town of Johnson applied for and received a Town Improvement grant (in Ken's opinion, this is a grant that anyone that asks for gets because only so many people apply). This grant provided a road, septic system and well on the parcel. The development is comprised of 110 units covering 24 acres. The septic system built with the town grant handles 66 or 67 dwellings, another system covers the rest. There is a paved road, one well for all dwellings. There is a community building, and the development is characterized as a community. Residents own their own homes on land owned by Sterling Ridge. Ken is preparing to retire, so residents are buying land, in a homeowners association type of arrangement. According to Ken, there are no downsides to the development. It is always full.

In the following discussion, the planning commission considered how an affordable housing development in Craftsbury might affect the rest of the people in town and property taxes, and informally discussed open spaces in town that might be possible sites for an affordable housing community. There was also discussion of the various types of and needs for affordable housing including subsidized housing, homeowners association, housing for first time homebuyers and those retiring and downsizing, and affordable rental housing.

We also came back to the statutory definition of affordable housing. In Vermont this is 30% of gross income, and using Alison Lowe's median income figure for Craftsbury, this would be 30% of \$51,618, which is \$15,485, or \$1290/month. There was consensus that we need more data from Alison, such as average and mode income figures. Linda will seek this data from Alison.

Discussion continued about all the other costs of living: daycare, groceries, commuting. Emily will follow up with Montgomery Select Board member Charlie to see what Montgomery is doing about affordable housing.

The planning commission discussed the idea of having a panel with Gordon's sister, Gus Selig or someone else from VHCB, which would be open to the public. The thought is to do this in the spring, when weather and driving are not factors. There was discussion about doing an informal survey, tabling at town mtg, and advertising the panel there.

Gordon summed up the need for affordable housing with the phrase "If you build an empire and no one can live in it the empire is no good."

Linda and Emily will look at NVDA website for other town plans to see how other towns are addressing affordable housing.

Rudy attended the NEK Leads conference which had the theme "Connect, Inspire, Celebrate" and reported on the day there. The conference focused on success stories from other towns, and identifying problems: housing, day care, broadband. Rudy thinks we are doing a lot of things right, and is proud to be from Craftsbury. Craftsbury has daycare, though not enough, at the same time we acknowledge that have a lot of work to do. There were 200 people at the conference networking to build and share resources, and find avenues for working together on issues. The general takeaway: NEK is by itself, is still a diamond in the very rough, what do we want to be, who do we want to be, how do we market ourselves are all questions. The importance of leveraging moments when we are in the highs to get dollars was acknowledged. People are looking to Craftsbury as an example. Emily reminded us that we live in a rose colored world where many of the difficulties other towns in our area have are not as acute. Rudy expressed that we have to decide what we want to be, what we want to look like. Have to define what direction we want to take, what character, who do we want to attract, and what are we going to do when we do attract people.

Next meeting December 12. Those with assignments will come back with more information about affordable housing, and we'll explore language about the possibility of a community trust.

Gordon made a motion to adjourn, Annie seconded. Adjourned 8:28.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Ramsdell