

## Craftsbury Planning Commission June 2019

Members Present: Farley Brown, Dave Rowell, Rudy Chase, Ross Davis, Tim Patterson, Annie Rowell, Linda Ramsdell

Farley called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm, and went over the agenda for tonight's meeting. Dave moved to approve the May minutes. Linda seconded. Minutes approved.

Rudy began an engaging presentation about climate change thermodynamics. He attended a series of three classes the subject, and shared the key points, beginning with a demonstration of how little of the water on earth is fresh water, and how much of that fresh water is in glaciers, groundwater, and permafrost. Surface and atmospheric water is only a small proportion of total freshwater, and of that surface and atmospheric water, most is in lakes, with less than 1.6% in rivers. Greenhouses gasses trapped in the atmosphere are disrupting natural cycles, creating problems such as extreme weather, warming oceans, melting glaciers, desertification, etc. The melting of glaciers is a particularly serious problem, because glaciers account for most of the fresh water on earth, and that water could flow into the oceans.

Next, Farley began a discussion about affordable housing. The commission reviewed the definition of affordable housing as expressed in Vermont Statute: 24 V.S.A 4303. As a rough rule of thumb, affordable housing is housing that costs  $\frac{1}{3}$  of gross monthly income. Farley noted that in the past, many cities and towns encouraged neighborhoods of single unit dwellings, but that now many are struggling with lack of affordable housing, and looking at options for more multi-family dwellings and accessory units.

The Commission discussed data specific to Craftsbury. 86% of total housing stock in Craftsbury are one-unit detached dwellings. 6% are mobile homes. 5% are two, three, and four-unit dwellings. Dave noted with skepticism the published statistic that 36% of all families with children under the age of 5 in Craftsbury were living below the poverty line.

For next steps, Dave and Annie will research statistics about housing stock in Craftsbury, using data from the 2017 townwide assessment. Dave will also ask Alison about statistics relating to average household income in Craftsbury. Rudy noted recent statistics published today by Vermont Business Magazine that illustrate how many hours a minimum wage worker would need to work to afford an apartment. The average hourly wage worker is coming up short in terms of being able to access affordable housing. Dave and Annie noted that housing inventory is very tight in Craftsbury right now.

Next, the Commission looked at data from the U.S. Census Bureau showing the percentages of people who are paying more than 30% of their household income on housing. About half of these people are renters. 39.3% live in a house with a mortgage, and 26.7% live in a house without a mortgage, but still spend more than 30% of their income in maintenance, heat, property taxes, etc.

Farley turned the conversation to a discussion of goals and possible action items that relate to affordable housing, and the stated goals in the housing section of the Town Plan. Linda noted generational differences in how people think about housing, and Dave and Ross noted that prior to the 1950s towns would have town farms for indigent people, and overseer of the poor, and other community resources. Annie noted that although shared definitions of housing terms are important, reframing the discussion around terms that are not charged could be useful in order to come up with solutions that are the right fit for Craftsbury.

Dave noted that there is demand for low-maintenance local community housing for older folks, in addition to starter homes and affordable rental units for younger folks and families. Rudy noted that preserving the character of Vermont is important, and that solutions that repurpose existing structures could be a good approach. Annie voiced the possibility of exploring homeshare structures that involve work-trade, which could meet needs of older folks who want less maintenance responsibility and younger folks who want lower rents. Linda noted that local architect David Koschak is interested in helping. Christina Goodwin, who works at Sterling, was Executive Director of Homeshare Now, and could be a helpful resource also.

Farley noted that one outcome of the Community Visit was the suggestion to form an affordable housing taskforce, and proposed that a sub-committee of the Planning Commission focus on housing moving forward. Linda noted that much of the work will involve information gathering, and finding solutions that work in a town the size of Craftsbury. Although the Commission will not meet in July or August, Farley suggested that the sub-committee meet in August to move the conversation forward. Farley also suggested inviting Sherry, Gordy's sister, to the September meeting - scheduled for the 2nd Thursday of the month, September 12th.

The Selectboard has the updated Energy Plan.

The Commission held hands and adjourned at 8:06 pm.

