

**Washington Housing Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 6:30 pm
Town Hall and on Zoom**

Members present: Judie Gorra, Carrie Loyd, Darryl Wright, Henrietta Small

Staff: Michelle Gorra

Public: Ann Jamieson (from *Voices*), Lindsay Larson (from LCCHO, presenting)

- 1. Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm**
- 2. Review of Minutes February 13, 2024**
 - a. Darryl moves to accept the minutes, Henrietta seconds, all in favor**
- 3. Old Business**
 - a. Update on Baldwin Hill Property**
 - i. Judie gave invoices to Linda Gomez; will first go to Selectmen, then the Board of Finance. Checks will be cut this week in the amounts of \$2800 and \$700 for engineering for the Baldwin Hill property.
 - b. Update on additional property being donated to the Washington Community Housing Trust**
 - i. Closing will be in April, Bill has engineers lined up for a feasibility study. Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity wrote up a proposal summary of engineering work that could be needed. Lindsay has already sent this to Bill.
 - ii. Bill has said that they are looking into multifamily housing options for this property.
 - c. Update on request for change in Housing Commission ordinance to include the purchase of land and structures for affordable housing projects.**
 - i. Selectmen have not yet reviewed, but it is coming up at their meeting this week.
- 4. New Business**
 - a. Discussion of the Playbook and Toolkit material developed by the Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity. Lindsay Larson is present to help us in this endeavor.**
 - i. LCCHO is a non-profit coordinating a regional response to housing affordability challenges in Litchfield County.
 - ii. Currently partnered with 18 different developments underway
 - iii. Review of Playbook and Toolkit
 1. Playbook: Goal is public will-building to support projects and activate interested parties
 - a. Strategies included in document: Build optimism, navigate disruptive comments, make people and systems the main characters, develop authentic engagement strategy
 - b. Information comes from surveys, representatives, and general feedback
 2. Toolkit: Examples of concrete ideas for communications and engagement
 - a. Strategies included in the document: Newsletters, social media, public speaking, event engagement
 - b. Document is made to engage people who are already in favor, but need to be activated; not to win over detractors
 - c. The Town of Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission's e-newsletter is a great example

- i. Salisbury uses an opt-in model for subscribers; anyone can sign up
- iv. Litchfield County Housing Needs Assessment
 - 1. Coming soon, hopefully within the next month; website with data by town
 - 2. This is designed to be a helpful resource for commissions to use in communications
- v. Discussion of the validity of American Community Survey data
 - 1. Michelle raises inaccuracies with this data, Lindsay agrees it is not the best for small-town data reporting, but clarifies that other sources were also used.
 - 2. Regional Plan Association assisted with the project and ensured data was thoroughly examined
 - 3. Henrietta raises the source Data Haven, Lindsay will explore and cross-check with the existing data
- vi. Salisbury newsletter model might be ambitious for this group, but could be a goal
 - 1. Once-a-month Selectmen's email includes commission updates and could be a place to start
 - 2. Lindsay suggests a twice-annual or quarterly communication as a place to start
 - 3. An interesting first topic could be the difference between the Trust and the Commission
- vii. Michelle asks Lindsay if there is something we should be focusing on
 - 1. Lindsay suggests collaboration between the Trust and Commission; presence at events, continuing written updates in newsletters

b. Any other concerns of members.

- i. Michelle shares that the town was awarded the Congressionally Directed Spending Grant of \$950k; we applied to fund repairs at Dodge Farm.
 - 1. This is a lot for the Trust to manage on top of their other projects
- ii. Board of Selectmen will present their budget to the Board of Finance (April 1) then they vote and then take it to a town meeting (May 16)
 - 1. This budget includes a substantial request from this commission
 - a. Members of this commission should plan to be in attendance
- iii. Habitat for Humanity home dedication is tentatively June 29 in Town Hall
 - 1. This will be a celebration and an educational opportunity
 - 2. Michelle suggests a welcome basket for these two new families moving to town
 - a. Michelle will talk to WBA about items
 - 3. Possibility that houses #3 and #4 may also be ready
 - a. Darryl shares that two Shepaug teachers may be purchasing house #3
 - 4. If CHAFA guidelines are followed we can count them as affordable (until resold)
- iv. Michelle proposes the idea of purchasing a branded tablecloth if the budget allows, Commission agrees

c. Meeting adjourned at 7:27

Respectfully Submitted,
Carrie Loyd, Secretary

Link to meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0z1q3lhOJo>