

TOWN OF CHESTER
HOUSING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
October 24, 2023

PRESENT: Nancy Pennell, Hugh Quinn, Jason Rasmussen, Joe Karl, Joel Fineberg, Bill Lindsay, Julie Hance, Preston Bristow

VISITORS: Peter Hudkins

Meeting was held at the Town Hall and via Zoom.

1. ORGANIZATION OF BOARD:

Bill Lindsay nominated Hugh Quinn for position of Chair. Hugh declined the nomination.

Joe Karl nominated Nancy Pennell for position of Chair. Seconded by Hugh Quinn. Nomination passed.

Hugh Quinn nominated Joe Karl for Vice Chair. Seconded by Jason Rasmussen. Nomination passed.

Nancy Pennell nominated Hugh Quinn for Secretary. Seconded by Jason Rasmussen. Nomination passed.

The Commission agreed to set its regular meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. Meetings to be held at Town Hall.

The Commission discussed adopting Roberts Rules. It was agreed that Julie will provide draft Rules of Procedure to consider instead.

2. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS:

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

3. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizens comments.

4. REVIEW PURPOSE OF HOUSING COMMISSION:

The Commission reviewed the purpose as established by the Selectboard. Joel Fineberg noted that moving forward this is a moving target and initiatives will need to adapt.

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5. DISCUSS INITIATIVES AND GOALS OF THE HOUSING COMMISSION:

Jason Rasmussen reviewed the Keys to the Valley which is project implementation focused. It was suggested to review the data first which Jason will provide for the next meeting. Bill Lindsay stated that identifying the housing needs as well as available land is a priority. Joel noted that not all information out there is concrete. He also noted that we should be looking at special needs as well as ADA needs. Jason Rasmussen stated that the 2010-2030 studies show that there will be a need for 330 units. He will provide some data at the next meeting. Nancy suggested a map of available properties would be helpful.

Joe discussed needing to develop new ideas and then flush them out for viability. Hugh offered that a needs assessment may not be necessary. We may be able to use existing data to paint the picture. We can identify the targets then check the feasibility. All agreed that we will focus on targets, then line up funding and development with the intention of getting a quick win to boost momentum. Joel did comment that we may need to identify the needs through a study in order to gain funding.

Julie explained that she has applied for a planning grant that will provide a feasibility study for potential development of the town land on Route 103 South.

Preston stated that based on data he has read, there is a range of housing types needed. A blend would be preferred. Jason Rasmussen and Julie commented that there are a range of programs available to help with different needs.

Nancy indicated, again, that she would find a map helpful. Also a way of identifying empty buildings in town that are available and municipal infrastructure. Peter Hudkins has identified sewer lines location. Preston stated that properties that immediately come to mind are the Catholic Church and Cathy Hasbrouck's property on Pleasant Street. Jason and Julie will work on developing a map of town infrastructure and town owned properties.

Nancy noted that discussion of private property could be a challenge. Jason responded that private property was looked at in the Keys to the Valley. Preston stated that if private properties are identified and rise to the level of tangible, then we reach out to the property owners and make them aware.

Hugh stated that the Planning Commission completed an update last week where they received good feedback. However, there are some people who do not feel that there is a housing issue. There were also several who say we need all levels of housing and some brought the conversation back to short term rentals. Joe noted that there is a definitely a housing crisis. In his work he is seeing it every day.

90 The commission discussed various funding that might be available. Jason stated that
91 there is funding available for different types of housing. Julie stated that the town also
92 has a revolving loan fund that could be used. The town could also consider offering tax
93 stabilization programs which will require voter approval. Hugh stated that the town
94 needs an economic development plan to coincide with the housing goals/strategy.

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96 Discussion ensued regarding economic goals in Chester. Julie indicated that there are a
97 lot of opportunities out there and Chester has a lot drawing people to town. The town
98 needs to identify its goals and come up with a true economic plan. Julie discussed the
99 VOREC grant that is opening up soon. She would like to use the grant as an opportunity
100 to develop a full recreation plan for Chester, to include not only the Pinnacle, but all
101 recreation opportunities in town.

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103 Joel questioned if the negative housing concerns will be an issue. Hugh noted that
104 comments he has heard are mostly the “not in my backyard” comments. He also heard
105 that the population has not grown.

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107 6. NEXT AGENDA

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109 The next meeting will be the fourth Tuesday in November at 6:00 p.m.

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111 7. ADJOURN

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113 A motion was made by Joe Karl to adjourn. Seconded by Hugh Quinn. The meeting
114 adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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