

Sherman Housing Commission

March 26, 2012

Minutes

Present: Steve Roffwarg, Michelle Hansen, Jeanette Perlman, John O'Connor, Beth Trott, Jill Finch, Lorna Barrett, John Jenner, Peter Cohen. Guests: Charlie Reppenhagen, First Selectman Clay Cope, Selectman Chris Jellen, Carol Faure. David Berto.

Minutes of Feb. 27 meeting were approved as read. Motion to approve by John O'Connor, seconded by Jeanette Perlman. OK unanimous.

Steve Roffwarg, chair of the Housing Commission, welcomed members of the Commission on Aging. Dates considered for the public forum are June 2 and June 9. Plans call for the forum to be an informational meeting, predominately for seniors but could be for anyone in town who wants to find out about affordable senior housing. The forum would require some visuals, literature, publicity, speakers. Steve introduced David Berto, consultant, to discuss major areas identified that need to be covered.

David discussed need to work backwards from goal. Design, approvals, funding sources, market analysis, etc. Need to identify needs of the community. It is important for everyone in the community to realize this is a joint effort. David discussed the needs of seniors at this time of their life. He discussed a range of income criteria and how the building units might be altered to accommodate this range. This is not going to solve all housing problems for everyone in town, he said. Other things may be phased over time.

Market analysis: David says you need local anecdotal analysis. It is more of a qualitative analysis. Funding sources will tell us what market analysis is needed. Most market analysis is information the commissions can access themselves.

The first step in proposing a plan is the site. The whole purpose of this is to establish some type of site control. Commission needs to demonstrate that it has site control and therefore can work from that. Site control means we have a contract with someone to transfer ownership in future, noted David. It could be a year lease to get the work organized. We are not looking for money from town of Sherman. We are looking for state and federal funding, commissioners noted.

Steve: We want to bring our thoughts to the community and make it very transparent what we want to do and what the options are. We want to present the options and listen to input.

The first step will be a short-term lease to determine feasibility of property. Then go to next phase. If study results of the property prove it is not a good site, the commission could end contract with property owner (town) at end of lease period. Having a site that is feasible and having site control is the first step.

A question was raised: Is there a plan B for an alternative site? Answer: No. There is no plan B. Steve noted that while many, many sites were looked at and considered, at this point, we believe it is our best site.

Michelle Hansen noted that the location was best case for proximity to library, post office, worship, walking trails, etc. It also gives privacy and accessibility for emergency services. Michelle noted that the commission is still open to other options, should they become available and suitable. Steve reiterated that the main priority is to not incur expenses on the town of Sherman.

A discussion of census information followed. Beth Trott, director of social services and the Senior Center, noted that 33.5 percent of Sherman residents are 55 and older. 24 percent are 60 and over. CT overall has a larger elderly population than other states.

Discussion followed on outline for the Housing Forum. An informational forum would be to show people what is available. Discussion ensued on the range of housing: is it affordable? What exactly is "affordable." When we have the forum, we need to be prepared to respond appropriately to the questions of "affordable".

Jeanette Perlman noted that New Fairfield is also holding a housing forum on April 14. Their speaker will be from the Washington Housing Trust. David would like to attend also. Jeanette will attend. Jeanette noted that New Fairfield was also looking at property for affordable senior housing.

Sherman Housing Forum: A date was selected of June 9, Saturday, in the School cafeteria from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Potential speakers include Lesley Higgins-Biddle and Patricia Spring. Lesley Higgins-Biddle is with Local Initiative Support Corp. Her job is to help small non-profits secure affordable housing. Patricia Spring, CT Housing Coalition, is another person who has a good understanding of what's going on in the state. Steve will contact them to attend and bring relevant literature.

Discussion followed on the actual agenda of the proposed Forum. Included in the forum will be visuals of what housing could look like and census information. Forum will also include audience questions.

Publicity: Steve will write something with Jeanette to get into the papers. Timeframe: We will have 2 more meetings before forum. Strong publicity push will begin mid-May. We need to get marketing and public relations done. Stories in the paper. Jill Finch: let's interview some of the people who are facing leaving Sherman. Catharine and Michelle will look at doing a power point of the Sherman people who are currently in need of senior housing and how the loss of seniors effects town.

Discussion of publicity included getting stories into local papers and into the Spectrum and New Milford papers. John O'Connor suggested that selectmen should speak at the forum to show support. Commission on Aging: We should have one person from the COA take on a leadership role to be in charge of publicity. Jill Finch agreed to coordinate publicity.

David wrote up an extensive Agenda for the forum which included the following: Brief remarks by the COA and the Housing Commission and Selectmen.
Process: What's been done so far. What's needed.
What is affordable housing? Some visuals.
Discussion by other guests, Pat and Lesley. How affordable housing works in the state.
Issue of site control.
Moving forward in pre-development. And market range we are trying to accomplish.
Location and photos. Presentation of a conceptual design for discussion purposes.
Input from audience. Welcome.
Some kind of wrap up. Touch on high points and action plan to move forward.

Discussion ensued on focus of forum and breadth of information. What do you want to accomplish at conclusion of session? We do not want to overwhelm. What would you leave out? Discussion followed to narrow the focus of the forum. David noted that he was putting this together for a one-time presentation. Maybe it would be two different presentations.

COA needs to discuss. COA meets on April 16 at 8:30 a.m. Housing Commission meets again on April 23 at 6 p.m. in the school cafeteria.

Reminder: April 14 is the Housing Forum in New Fairfield.

The commission took questions from the audience. Discussion of words and images related to "HUD" and "affordable", etc. David said this will not be HUD housing, it may be partially HUD. It will be senior

housing. To use the word “HUD” is presumptuous, because the funding is not secured. There are other sources of funding, especially in the state of CT. The state government has increased sources of funding for senior housing.

Discussion of private funding sources followed. Perhaps a source list of funding would be appropriate, including the various potential sources. These are the places the money could come from. It is not a bond issue. It is not a town project.

Carol Faure discussed senior, affordable housing in New Fairfield. They are condos in the \$400,000 range to \$250,000 range. She said Sherman just had in front of planning and zoning another developer who wanted to put condos into Sherman. Steve: our commission really wants to service the most needy people.

Jeanette noted studies point to rental properties as preferred property for seniors. Discussion ensued on considering the needs of the community in a range of housing. Inform community that the vision is broad and would or could accommodate a lot of variety in housing. Focus was to start on the neediest. The focus of the forum will be to embrace the questions and comments. Upfront and transparent. The forum will be an opportunity for both the commissions and the public to learn and to listen, commissioners said. John Jenner suggested following up with a questionnaire at the conclusion of the forum. People could pick up and return for further follow up. Emphasis on telling and listening. An opportunity to hear what the public and the seniors need.

A suggestion was made to put the town website on the questionnaire so that questions could come directly back to town.

Upcoming meetings: Commission on Aging: April 16, 8:30 a.m.
Sherman Housing Commission: April 23, at 6 p.m. with the Commission on Aging.

June 9: Sherman Housing Forum

David will send everyone his written agenda.

Motion to adjourn.

Submitted:

Lynne Gomez
(from recording)