

# Sherman Housing Commission

**Regular meeting:** Monday, March 18, 2013

**Present:** Steve Roffwarg, chair; Charlie Reppenhagen, Michelle Hansen. Davod Berto, Consultant. Lynne Gomez, clerk.

**Guests:** Selectman Chris Jellen and Tony Langley.

**Overview of the upcoming referendum.** The goal is to have some division of labor over what the Housing Commission needs to do in the next 7 weeks to present to the people of Sherman information about Affordable Senior Housing in order for them to vote on site control and the proposed lease agreement at the May 11 referendum. The May 11 referendum will ask the people of Sherman to vote on a lease agreement between the Town of Sherman and the Sherman Housing Commission. The May 11 referendum will also include votes on the school and town budgets.

**COA involvement:** Steve noted that it is very important going into the last leg to have the Commission on Aging on board and to work toward presenting the facts. COA will get minutes of this meeting in order to plan for its input in the coming weeks. The purpose of this meeting was to get the senior center and the Commission on Aging behind the project and to use the stats they have gathered and begin to place articles in the paper. Steve reiterated that it is very important to stress the need for Senior Affordable Housing in Sherman. He stressed how important it is for the senior members of the community to express how important this housing will be to them. Steve also stressed that this first referendum is best and only opportunity to move the project forward.

**Lease:** There will be a lease that has been put together. The lease will be between the Town of Sherman and the Sherman Housing Commission. The lease area is shown on the lease survey map. (See attached). The occupants, listed in the lease agreement, will be elderly, age 62 and older. The occupants will include at least 50 percent low or moderate income residents. The term of the lease ends Dec. 31, 2058, which is approximately 45.5 years. Automatic extensions of 10 years each are possible if maintained per the lease. Cancellation: If construction does not start by Dec. 31, 2016 or if construction is not complete by Dec. 31, 2020.

**Rent:** Rent for the leased property is \$1 per year. **Assignment:** The Housing Commission can assign the lease to the new non-profit corporation. **Easements:** Possible easement needed at entrance, to work with existing drive and parking. **Taxes:** The Housing Agency, or not-for-profit, will pay taxes to the Town of Sherman as agreed upon by the Town of Sherman.

Planned promotional material is similar to the Housing Forum. It will include an insert into the Citizen News to answer questions.

**Questions:** Steve noted that questions that must be answered include: What does the site control we seek in the referendum do for us? (It allows us to raise the money.) How are we going to fund the project? Will there be taxpayer impact? How long will this take? After the referendum, what's next? Why do we want to lease the land? Will the recreational areas be affected? How many units will be in the project? How many bedrooms in each? What does site control do for us? Who is eligible for senior affordable housing? What are the age limits? How many people will be able to live there? Who will serve on the board of directors? When will you get the Housing Trust or not-for-profit entity organized? What will the responsibility of the Trust be?

Steve noted that the questions and answers will become part of a flier and insert. Date for insert into the Citizen News will be May 1 and May 8. Michelle discussed the value of social media in the informational process. Steve suggested that if there is a way to have the same info on our print matter also in social media, go ahead.

**Timeline:** Steve emphasized that the mission of the Housing Commission is to be as transparent as possible and to answer as many questions as possible. Discussion followed. Steve stressed the need for a clear timeline of the project. The lease will also be clearly discussed. The recreation fields will NOT be affected. Michelle suggested that the timeline begin at the mid-90's, at which time the town understood part of the state mandate for affordable housing included housing for seniors.

Discussion ensued on continuing to stress the need for the housing, but also address plans going forward. Charlie noted that the "need" for housing has been established, and now is the time to work forward with the "hows" of getting the project established.

David suggested that it is appropriate to remind people of the need. Steve noted that we have to have some idea of how many units and the type of units. David said we have to give the residents what we can give them now, but suggested that this vote, simply to allow a lease agreement, would then pave the way to explore the next level: which would include funding sources and what type and how many units could be developed.

Discussion followed on the number of units the people of Sherman would like to see for senior affordable housing.

David suggested the commission establish a clear list of what you want to accomplish, an agenda, and a presentation package of information. Discussion followed on whether the Housing Commission would have an opportunity for a full presentation. **Conclusion:** The presentation would have to be in the local press and in the form of a flier for the Citizen News. The referendum on May 11 will be strictly a vote, with no opportunity for a presentation. The message will have to get out via other forums.

**Regarding the referendum on May 11:** The Housing Commission will have to get onto the referendum with its question. Steve and Chris Jellen discussed that process. Steve will put that in writing. The wording of the actual referendum question will be the work of the First Selectman and the Town Attorney.

**NOTE:** The wording of the referendum would be by the town attorney. The referendum is only on site control and the lease. David has a 17-page lease ready to present.

**Zones:** Discussion followed of the Planning and Zoning meeting on March 21. The land in question is divided into two zones: Zone B and Zone C. David had discussed getting the land to be designated as all B or all C. Charlie suggested bringing this option before the P n Z meeting on Thursday. David said he would attend the meeting and that he had prepared the amendment to the zoning regulations. The document is 2-3 pages long and would adapt the zoning regulation and change the zone to C. The property in question is about 7 acres.

David noted that the planning and zoning phase is a 2 step process. The first step is to get zoning which would allow multi-family elderly housing and all land into the C zone. This is so you can do what you want to do later. The second step would be a special permit application, when P n Z will ask all the other detailed questions.

Discussion followed of rentals and tax generation.

**Promotional Plans:** Steve recommended that the commissioners develop answers to the posed questions and send answers to him. This will result in some of the copy for the May inserts in the Citizen News. GOAL: to have 8.5 X 11 page, both sides, with FAQ on the Referendum inserted in May 1 and May 8 Citizen News, and include other copy in Sentinel and Spectrum.

Steve will contact chairs of the Commission on Aging to get onto April 15 agenda. Both he and Michelle plan to attend the commission on aging meeting, which is at 8:30 a.m. In turn, they will ask members of the COA to join the Housing Commission meeting on April 15 at 6 p.m.

Steve reminded commissioners of the Thursday night 7 p.m. Planning and Zoning meeting at town hall. David will attend.

The commissioners moved to table the review of minutes of the Feb. Meeting until the next meeting. April 15.

***Upcoming important dates:***

Thursday, March 21, Planning and Zoning. Housing is second on the agenda.

Monday, April 15: 8:30 a.m. Commission on Aging meeting. Need to get active support of COA. Steve plans to attend.

Monday, April 15: 6 p.m. Housing Commission regular meeting. Encourage attendance of COA.

Week of April 22: prior notice and warning for Housing on Referendum.

Thursday, April 25: Board of Selectman. Budget Hearing. Could the selectmen move the question of the lease to a referendum?

Friday, May 3: Annual Town Meeting

Saturday, May 11: Referendum on budget and also on Lease and Site control.

Tony Langley suggested that the Commission 1) address the concerns, because there is chatter out there, and 2) address the “what’s in it for me?” question, which would find people more likely to support something if there’s something “in it” for them.

Tony also added that emphasizing the “self-funding” aspect of the project is important. Chris Jellen noted that reinforcing the fact that it will not cost taxpayer money is important.

Discussion followed on the referendum for the site control and lease being held at the same referendum as the town and school budgets. Steve noted that the cost to have a separate referendum is about \$3000 and they want to save the town money by having the “site control” referendum on the same ballot as the budgets.

If site control is turned down, can the commission go before the town again? To be determined.

Further discussion on the payment of services for the proposed housing, such as snow removal, etc. Would this be a cost to the town? David said, “if the town doesn’t want to do anything to house their elderly, there’s nothing I can do to change their minds.” His point was, everyone has to do something to contribute. Yes, it will NOT use taxpayer dollars for construction. Yes, it will use available state and federal funds. But “we’d like to continue to have a dialogue, if we say we’re never going to ask for anything, that puts a real limit on what you can do going forward, to make it work.”

Road maintenance, road services, grass cutting, etc. are usually the things that come up. These costs usually come out of the rentals, but it is town land. Discussion followed on taxes. Discussion followed on asking for private donations, like the Roxbury project, which got private donations to add garages to the units. David noted that the commission needs to show town support. Town support is critical to demonstrate in the battle to secure funding.

***Motion to adjourn*** 6:50 p.m.

Submitted,

Lynne Gomez