

Sherman Housing Commission

April 15, 2013

Present: Steve Roffwarg, chair. Michelle Hansen, Charlie Reppenhagen, Jeanette Perlman. David Berto, consultant. Selectman, Chris Jellen. Members of the Commission on Aging: Peter Cohen, Lorna Barrett, John Jenner.

Minutes: Minutes of the Feb. 18, 2013 Meeting and the March 18, 2013 meeting were approved as read.

Goals: Goal of this meeting is to redefine the schedule of action leading up to a referendum. The Commission on Aging, which Steve met with earlier in the day, has restated its interest in working with Housing to meet that goal.

Referendum: Steve noted that it has become “unrealistic” to move forward with the May 11 referendum. There has been no real progress on the lease. Therefore, abandoning the May 11 referendum is based on two reasons: 1) the lease language is not ready in a timely manner to present to the public, 2) it might not be wise to couple with the budget vote at the May 11 referendum.

Lease: David Berto had presented the town attorney with an 18-page lease, which had been used and proven in Willington. He also presented zoning regulations. However, the town attorney raised questions as to the necessity of a lease, among other things.

Discussion followed on the best way to resolve the matter of the lease with the town attorney. Question: Who gives the town attorney direction? Answer: The first selectman. Bottom line: If Housing does not get the lease, it cannot move forward on securing funding for the project. The lease needs to be sanctioned by Town Attorney and BOS and then made available to the public on an informational basis prior to any referendum. New goal: to be in position to go to referendum by July.

Discussion followed on the disadvantages of piggybacking with the budget vote. Perhaps voters in the mood to vote down the town and school budgets might vote down the lease approval as well. Housing originally decided to have the lease vote coincide with the budget vote as a means to save the town money. A single referendum costs the town about \$3000.

Steve will speak with Selectman Andrea O'Connor and the town attorney regarding the lease. Michelle Hansen asked: If not a lease, what document would the Housing Commission present to potential funding sources? If the town attorney is recommending there is no need for a lease? Berto suggested that there are other options, such as a BOS approved document making the land available. However, Steve noted, voters would not get a chance to chime in on the decision. Steve and the other Housing members and COA members expressed desire for a referendum. Berto reminded the commission that

state and federal funding sources want to see as much public support as possible. A favorable referendum shows such support.

Planning and Zoning: Steve reported that Planning and Zoning want to see the project go forward. PnZ meet on May 2 at 7 p.m. Steve, Charlie and David will attend. They hope to have the 8-24 signed off. (8-24 is a standard general statutes document which is required any time a town acquires property or gets rid of property or enters into a lease agreement.)

Discussion followed, led by David, which examined other avenues to the necessary change in zoning regulations. Bottom line: Housing must eventually present to funding sources that plans for the project are consistent with zoning regulations.

Information: Steve will oversee the strategy for publicizing the Housing Commission's plans over the coming weeks. Main points are: no taxpayer dollars will be used in the project; outside funding sources will be sought; the project is moving forward in identifiable phases; the lease is only one of those phases; the public will be asked every step of the way.

Information campaign will include the COA spearheading the "human" side of the discussion, by identifying residents who would benefit from Senior Affordable Housing. COA will also handle the statistical information. Housing will answer questions. Informational campaign will include Aging Advocate, letters to the editor, and an insert in the local paper prior to the referendum.

David suggested the informational campaign would be similar to that used prior to the Town Vote on funding the survey. The goal, he said, is a successful referendum and you move backwards from that. David summarized: finalize the technical issues of the lease language, follow the referendum process, identify political issues, and attempt to get enough people to vote yes. This process includes an information campaign that addresses "human" issues, statistics and answers the larger questions.

Steve will spearhead the strategy for publicity in the coming weeks. He will email the strategy to everyone involved. John Jenner noted that providing townspeople with follow up information is important. For example: When the land survey results in a report of good soil and very little ledge, let people know. Peter Cohen emphasized how important it is to tell people that they are being asked for input every step of the way.

Senior: Charlie Reppenhagen noted that the zoning regulations presented by David do not include the phrase "Senior" housing. Following discussion, the commission asked David to include the word "Senior" into the zoning regs. David will add it to the title and purpose of the zoning regs and will include a definition in the copy. David noted that zoning regulations supportive of the project, very clear cut and acted on by the town, are important to strengthen Sherman's position with funders.

Community Outreach: Discussion followed on reaching out to people and institutions in close proximity to the proposed project. Bottom line: it is good practice to reach out to people to share information and concerns. Charlie Repp will talk to Fran Fratini of Park and Rec. Other people to reach include Holy Trinity Church, American Pie, the Post Office and Naromi.

Jeanette followed with information on the COA's pending Volunteer Community Event in the fall. An organizational meeting will be held May 18 to begin planning. This event is in keeping with the plan to reach out to all the institutions and commissions in town.

Next meeting: May 20 at 5:30 p.m. at the Senior Center.

Motion to adjourn: 7:30 pm

Submitted,

Lynne Gomez