

# Sherman Housing Commission

Minutes

Dec. 16, 2013

Present: Steve Roffwarg, Michelle Hansen, John O'Connor, Jeanette Perlman. Guest: Stan Greenbaum. Clerk: Lynne Gomez.

Minutes for November meeting were approved as read.

Steve discussed lease resolution status. In November BOS meeting, the representatives of the Housing Commission discussed with town attorney a few "minor changes" necessary for the Lease Resolution. At the November meeting, the BOS agreed the changes would be made in time for the December BOS meeting. A response was received by Housing Commission from Town Attorney which made changes to the leases that were NOT discussed. He changed the time period, commented on changes, giving his opinions, changing eligibility notes, adding preference for Sherman residents (which is illegal, re: fair housing policy), etc.

Steve noted that he felt the town attorney was encouraged to create a misleading document. He added that the changes requested by the Housing Commission could have been done in an hour, the BOS would have voted on it three days later, a Town Meeting could have been set to allow voters to vote on the Lease Resolution. "Now we are left with nothing we can use here," said Steve.

In response, commission consultant David Berto offered to make the original changes requested and have them ready to present at BOS on Thursday night. Commissioners agreed unanimously.

The document presented by the Town Attorney was deemed useless, misleading, expensive and reprehensible. The Housing Commission was united in its outrage. Discussion ensued on whether the action by the Town Attorney can be viewed as Housing Discrimination, Ageism Discrimination, etc.

The Housing Commission has done everything it was asked to do, Steve noted. Housing received a "resounding" YES from Planning and Zoning. Steve said at the pending BOS meeting set for Thursday, he will talk about what was agreed upon in November and point out the results.

Three major concerns in the work completed by the Attorney include:

- 1) Complete disregard for direction of Housing Commission.
- 2) It is Housing Discrimination to include preference for Sherman residents, which the town attorney added to the lease.
- 3) When the Attorney added "families" to the lease, it completely disregarded the intent and instructions of the Housing Commission, which specified loudly and early, that the housing is for Seniors.

Bottom line: There was an agreement by the BOS to proceed with the lease language as discussed, however, the attorney went off track and did not follow the directions of the Selectmen.

Discussion ensued on the disappointment regarding the work of the Town Attorney.

Stan Greenbaum noted that the Housing Commission was tasked by the BOS several years ago to recommend action to result in affordable senior housing. The commission completed that task, got a consultant, dealt with all the pre-requisites and wants to go forward with a vote on whether taxpayers want to allow the project.

Discussion followed on the BOS role in getting the attorney to complete the task requested. The housing commission decried the loss of time and money. The consultant reported that the town will never get state or federal funding with the lease wording as presented.

Details of the lease, as presented, were examined by the commission. Erroneous additions made by the attorney were noted, including some that were deemed illegal. Discussion of taking action to change attorneys was discussed.

Stan suggested not dwelling on the current dilemma, but, in the face of the attorney not doing what was requested, moving forward with the consultant's revision of the lease. He agreed that the commission should ask that the BOS move forward on it in order to bring the project to the voters.

Decision was made to present the final copy of the lease, as revised by the consultant, to the BOS for review and action. The commission has fulfilled all the requests placed before it, and any further delays will be considered obfuscation.

Discussion on the objections to Affordable Senior Housing followed. Who is opposed to it? It is for the people who live here and the parents of people who live here. Steve noted the arguments put forward include: desire for garages and more spacious housing.

The current project's positive elements include: property available to lease, state and federal funding, no tax dollars, location to services, etc.

Next meeting: Feb. 17, 2013

Motion to adjourn at 6:30 pm

Submitted,

Lynne Gomez, clerk