

Present

Bilal Ansari, Charles Bonenti, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Cathy Yamamoto (chair)

Absent: Leigh Short

Invited Guest: John Ryan (consultant)

Also Present: Jaime Bairstow and Kim Wells (Agriculture Commission), Rita Farrell (Mass Housing Partnership), Jack Noguiera (Mobile Home Rent Control Board), Brian O'Grady (Council on Aging), Susan Puddester (Higher Ground), Stanley Parese and Tom Sheldon (Affordable Housing Trust), Robert Scerbo, Ken Swiatek, Jaime Bairstow and Kim Wells (Agriculture Commission); press: Ed Damon (North Adams Transcript), Stephen Dravis (iBerkshires), Alex Elvin (Advocate), taper for (Willinet)

**Business**

1. Minutes

The minutes of the January 2 meeting were approved 5-0-0.

2. Presentation by John Ryan

Development consultant, from Montpelier, Vermont, came to present his findings to date.

- a. He has gathered demographic data from the federal census and the American Community Survey.
- b. One anomaly is that ACS has rental properties dropping an unbelievable amount (by a third). Mr. Ryan therefore adjusted the data, and they are his best approximation.
- c. The tables he supplied describe the population by age, housing size, housing type; disability; renting/owning; income, etc.
- d. Notable major trends include loss of population, a decline in the number of renters and especially of single-family rental housing (much of which might now be owned), a great decrease in rental households with children, a great increase in rental households whose rents are more than 35% of their income, a high number of owners whose housing costs are higher than that percentage.
- e. Comments and questions from committee: Van asked that greater detail be provided re the elderly and disabled populations. Cathy pointed out that affordable housing can have a preference for local people. Charles asked whether the affordable housing that the population is currently in is suitable as well as affordable, i.e. appropriate for children, or manageable for those with disabilities.
- f. Comments and questions from audience: Jack Noguiera asked how there could be vacant apartments when after Irene he looked for emergency housing and could find

little. Ryan responded that the most recent data are from 2011 and that the numbers he has are moving averages, so can't answer that question. Bob Scerbo asked whether housing on the Subsidized Housing Inventory was included (yes), whether those who qualify for subsidized housing in town were already living in such housing, and whether additional housing might act as a magnet for the region.

g. The committee decided that April 16 would be a good time to schedule John Ryan's presentation to the committee of his results.

### 3. Church Corners LLC Rent Increase

David Carver from Scarafoni Associates, the firm that operates the Church Corner (St Raphael's) apartments, explained a rent increase request filed with the town. Insurance and real estate tax increases (halved after negotiation with the town) would lead to a rent increase averaging \$37/apartment.

a. The Committee discussed the procedures for future rent requests and decided that as long as proper procedures have been followed, they do not need to approve adjustments in rent. They expressed a preference for pro-rated increases.

b. The committee does have a continuing responsibility, outlined in the Regulatory and Use Agreement, to be sure that the property is in good repair and the rents are set according to the agreement. Perhaps it would suffice for the committee to receive an annual statement about rent and operating expenses from Scarafoni, and annually ask the town inspector whether the property is in good repair.

c. Questions from the audience included whether the "70 percent rule" applies indefinitely (Carver was uncertain) and whether there is a waiting list (no because people who want an apartment want one immediately).

### 4. 59 Water St.

The committee reviewed the report about residual contamination of the site, and the estimate that the cleanup cost would be \$9150. The committee has already spent \$6600. The committee voted to fund the remaining clean-up 5-0-0.

### 5. Other sites

No news on Photec or FEMA.

### 6. Funding

Charles has assembled information about sources of funds for affordable housing in addition to the CPA. They include money for rehabilitation of existing structures, mortgage assistance, and rural housing. Rita and Van offered to help sort them out.

Documents consulted: Letter from Scarafoni Associates dated January 28, 2013, asking for a rent increase; Regulatory and Use Agreement between Church Corner LLC and the town, dated June 3, 2010; print-out of John Ryan's preliminary results.

**Next Meeting: March 5  
Meeting with John Ryan: April 16.**