

Present Charles Bonenti, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Leigh Short, Catherine Yamamoto (chair); Absent: Bilal Ansari

Also present: Suzanne Kemple, Susan Puddester, Bob Scerbo; Stephen Dravis (iBerkshires), Alex Elvin (Advocate), Martin Filion (Willinet)

## **Business**

### 1. Minutes

Van Ellet proposed two changes to the minutes of May 7. The minutes as amended were approved 5-0-0.

### 2. Warrant Articles for Annual Town Meeting

The committee discussed, then voted on, whether to recommend four housing-related warrant articles.

A. Article 27 to allocate \$200,000 in CPA funds to the AHT: vote to recommend 5-0-0.

B. Article 36 to grant a proposed co-op \$365,000 in town funds to purchase the Spruces: vote to recommend 0-5-0.

1. Cheryl Shanks stated that this was not viable economically, based on the pre-Irene cash flow and wretched status of the park's infrastructure.

2. Leigh Short said that the park will flood again, and the town would be morally if not legally liable if, knowing this, it reaffirmed housing there.

C. Article 37 to change voting from 2/3 to simple majority when deciding whether to take land from conservation to use for affordable housing: vote to take no action 5-0-0.

The committee stated that this is a good article and something that deserves energetic support, but that it should be discussed on its merits, after current controversies have abated.

D. Article 38 to set 10 acres of Lowry aside for affordable housing and to put the remainder in conservation: vote to take no action 5-0-0.

The committee thanked the citizens who forwarded this petition. It noted that a study of the property might lead it to recommend building on anything from none to all of the available acreage, so the transfer of 10 acres would be premature.

### 3. Review of funds spent to date.

A. The committee was given \$107,500 for engineering and feasibility studies at town meeting 2012.

B. The committee has to date spent about \$20,000, for the Guntlow conceptual design for Lowry, remediation at 59 Water St, the Housing Needs Assessment, and remediation at Photec.

C. The balance is \$87,752.96.

#### 4. Way forward putting the HNA to use

A. Jane Allen assembled the chairs of AHT, AHC, Ag, ConCom, Council on Aging, Housing Authority, Planning Board, and Selectmen to form a coordination committee for housing.

B. AHC would like to meet with the Trust to sort out a division of responsibilities.

1. Specific tasks that someone has to tackle range from the largest scale, e.g. coordination of all affordable housing in town, to medium-range, such as investigating financing and private property, to the smallest, e.g. writing an RFP to see what it would take to demolish or make useable the brick cube at Photec.

2. Some things that the state controls, e.g. whether there will be deed restrictions for Photec, need to be known before a developer could produce anything helpful as an RFP or even a conceptual design; that is out of our hands.

3. We need to clarify and separate our responsibilities, and then prioritize them.

C. Comments from community members

1. Suzanne Kemple remarked on the HNA's emphasis on elderly housing in which services can be added, and suggested that a site near Proprietor's Fields might be the best location to achieve this.

2. Bob Scerbo noted that if apartments or townhouses were built in town first, then Spruces residents might be able to live there transitionally before relocating to cottages.

#### 5. Community Involvement

The committee agreed that hearing from community members was an important priority. One idea is to create a citizen advisory board. Another is to assemble the steering committee (of chairs) and have open listening sessions.

#### 6. Mission statement

The committee adopted the following.

A. Mission

The mission of the Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee is to promote the creation and preservation of affordable housing and housing programs in Williamstown. We will:

1. Ensure that people with incomes at or below the area median income can access an affordable place to live.

As established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, housing is generally considered to be affordable when households spend no more than 35% of their gross income on housing costs (rent, utilities, mortgage, insurance, property taxes, condominium fees).

2. Create enough affordable housing so that the Town of Williamstown meets, at a minimum, the state's benchmark that 10% of the town's total housing units be affordable.
3. Promote an economically vibrant community.
4. Maintain and preserve the character and historic nature of Williamstown.

## B. Goals

### Near-term Goals (1-3 years)

Work with Town boards, committees, commissions and departments, and other interested parties, to develop a comprehensive housing plan that addresses the loss of homes in The Spruces Mobile Home Park and that will guide future AH efforts.

1. Enhance AHC's website so that interested community residents have access to:
  - a. essential current activities related to AH in Williamstown (e.g., committee minutes/agendas)
  - b. educational information related to various public or private programs and/or services
  - c. information about how/when they can comment or provide input on critical issues/decisions.
2. Complete an inventory of public and private (e.g., foundations) programs that might assist the Town in financing the development of affordable housing or supporting ongoing housing programs/services.
3. If needed, work with the Affordable Housing Trust to conduct fundraising for Affordable Housing.
4. Complete evaluations of sites owned by the Town that have potential for housing.
5. Identify at least one site that is feasible for the construction of housing that is affordable for households with low and moderate incomes, and initiate the predevelopment process.

### Long-term Goals (3-5 years)

1. Identify a site or sites suitable for the construction of 30-60 units.
2. Preserve existing affordable housing.

## 7. Membership and officers

- A. Chair: Cathy Yamamoto will remain chair for another year.
- B. Cheryl Shanks will remain secretary for some while.

C. Charles Bonenti will fill our newly established position of vice-chair, taking on more responsibilities as he is able, since he is retiring from his day job.

Documents used: booklet of town warrant articles.

**Next Meeting: May 28 at 4:00**  
**With Peter Fohlin, workshop on writing an RFP**

**After that:**  
**June 4 with AHT**