

TOWN OF CUMBERLAND HOUSING TASK FORCE MINUTES
October 11, 2022, at 6:30 pm

Call To Order: Chair Broder opened the meeting at 6:30 pm

Roll Call: Present: James Broder – Chair, Lu Gallaudet – Vice Chair, Rick Doane, Justin Wood, Mark Lapping, Gail Witherill, Katie Magoun, Town Councilor Bob Vail, Town Planner Carla Nixon & Admin. Asst. Christina Silberman. **Absent:** Brian Cashin, Betsey Harding, Eben Sweetser & Town Councilor Mark Segrist.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Doane asked that revisions be made to the prepared minutes. The minutes were not approved and Chair Broder will suggest revisions for consideration at the next meeting.

Chair Comments: Chair Broder reported that the Housing Task Force is engaged and communications are good. Focus tonight is on the Cumberland Housing Authority and the issue of accessory dwelling units and what policies could make ADUs more interesting for a greater number of people. The Housing Task Force's work will be done December 15th then the Town Council will deal with the Task Force's recommendations.

Chair Broder referred to the Cumberland Housing Authority and said it is a legally empowered organization that could do an enormous amount of additional work. Chair Broder asked what is needed to turn the Housing Authority into an activist authority, such as staffing and a new mission statement. Ms. Nixon said she is the Executive Director of the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority is there to oversee the housing available for one project, the Cumberland Meadows Senior Housing program with thirty units. Chair Broder said if it develops more housing, than the existing Housing Authority is likely to be involved with it. Ms. Nixon asked how the Authority would help with the process of creating more housing because the Authority may have the potential to do more but they would not go out and start a project.

Ms. Witherill noted that she looked at Westbrook Housing Authority that has a spinoff organization, the Westbrook Development Corp., which has done non-profit projects. Ms. Witherill noted the projects were for families also, not just seniors. Some projects included bring in services Head Start and Meals on Wheels.

Councilor Vail said that Cumberland is in a unique position. Cumberland's history is agriculture and farms and the Town did not have workforce housing built. Chair Broder noted housing authorities and have power of eminent domain power and other broad powers that can be used how the Town wants them used. Mr. Broder said it would be impactful to engage in conversation to create a meaningful, active, housing authority.

Ms. Magowan said she finds most creative non-profit housing authorities include a fundraising component. Ms. Gallaudet said the Authority would need a staff. Mr. Broder noted that housing authorities can create revenue.

Mr. Doane said the idea of creating a housing authority, not like the one Cumberland has now, makes sense. This would need the blessing of the Town Council.

Mr. Lapping said no matter what the Task Force recommends, the housing problem is not going away. There is a need for continuity, to keep addressing the issue over the years. This is a regional problem, not just in Cumberland. Mr. Lapping said Cumberland should be prepared to liaise and connect with other towns for regional solutions. Mr. Lapping said the Housing Authority should be a creature of the Town and not a separate entity. The Task force could recommend what the Housing Authority such as work with developers, apply for financing and be attached to the Planning Department.

Councilor Vail agreed that affordable housing is a regional problem and said trying to solve the problem as a community is a challenge. Councilor Vail said Cumberland should not shirk from the task. Councilor Vail's goal is that people who have lived in the community their entire life have somewhere to go. Councilor Vail likes the idea of giving the Housing Authority license to grow and said not to lose sight of people in need. Chair Broder said the purpose of the Housing Authority can be to focus on people in need.

Mr. Wood asked about the Task Force's scope of work and noted there is not much time to produce recommendations. Chair Broder said the Task Force is looking to make recommendations on a number of levels. The Task Force can recommend what the Housing Authority ought to be able to do and can recommend some real projects. Chair Broder said he would like to figure out why ADUs aren't doing what they were intended to do and to look at individual projects to create a substantial number of units.

Ms. Gallaudet said the Zoning and Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee members are looking at ideas individually and then will meet to look at specific issues to have a hard list.

Chair Broder noted that the Task Force should start drafting final recommendations after the next meeting. At the next Task Force meeting, each group should have their proposals ready for the Task Force to go through to develop a consensus and move to drafting recommendations.

Mr. Broder reviewed some suggestions provided by Mr. Doane for the Zoning and Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee such as investigating options for a Cumberland Housing Authority partner, partnering with other entities, ensuring projects meet the definition of affordability and to have Housing Authority projects have a preference of serving people with a connection to Cumberland.

Ms. Magoun said she does not agree with the idea of giving preference to Cumberland residents and that this seems like nativism. Mr. Doane said that when spending Town tax dollars, the Town should be providing to their constituents. Mr. Broder said it cannot be exclusionary. Mr. Doane said he is not averse to the Town providing some affordable housing to outsiders but he doesn't see paying taxes to support people outside of the community. Ms. Magoun noted that York Housing Authority has a requirement that applicants live within a certain distance of their town. Ms. Magoun said if the Housing Authority is more government funded, then she can see having a preference to people with Cumberland connections. Councilor Vail said Cumberland is a very affluent community and he likes the idea of providing a mix of diversity of incomes, this will need to be a community dialogue.

Mr. Wood said the Task Force should come up with recommendations that give a little something to everyone so there is a higher likelihood of being acceptable. The Task Force needs to be sensitive that what is recommended to have broad appeal to people to get them on board.

Ms. Witherill said mixed use zoning can have businesses on the bottom and residences on top. Councilor Vail said the Town is looking at this for West Cumberland.

Chair Broder asked Ms. Nixon why ADUs are not working in Cumberland. Ms. Nixon replied that the Town looked at ADUs several years ago and requires the owner to be one of the occupants. Ms. Nixon said LD2003 does not have a parking requirement and the Town ordinance does require that parking be available to add an ADU. Ms. Nixon said more there are not more ADUs being built because of the high cost of materials. Ms. Nixon noted that many Cumberland residents do not have a need for a second source of income and it is not desirable to have a tenant. Ms. Gallaudet noted that the Town ordinance or ADUs says there needs to be a parking space for every bedroom and Mr. Sweetser has suggested this be changed to requiring just one parking space.

Chair Broder said the impact of LD2003 on zoning is material to the Task Force's work. There will be a joint Town Council and Planning Board workshop to review the impacts of LD2003 on October 26th. The Housing Task Force will meet again on October 25th.

Mr. Lapping said a function of housing authorities is to promote new technologies and materials and he referred to an article in Planning magazine about successful innovations to bring down costs in construction.

Ms. Nixon said that it seems the Task Force envisions the Housing Authority as more of a Board of Directors with a staff and questioned whether the Town Council would be supportive of this. Chair Broder replied that housing authorities generate funds in a lot of ways and there are efficient ways to develop housing. The Housing Authority would have to amend their organizing documents and define their mission and this could be subject to Town Council approval. Mr. Doane said that if the Town empowers the Housing Authority to become a 501c3 non-profit to seek grants and partnerships with other agencies this would not resemble the housing authority the Town has now. Councilor Vail said this would be a dynamic change. Mr. Doane said this new housing authority would need a staff person that understands this work and a Board of Directors making policy recommendations.

Chair Broder referred to a comment made about ensuring the Town's current senior housing program is for low income. Mr. Doane said there should be a movement for senior housing to have a low or moderate income test for new tenants.

Mr. Lapping said he is concerned with families and suggested a program where the family nets some equity. Mr. Wood said home ownership is a reasonable path to net worth building and long term affordability is a good thing and providing one time affordability can be okay too. Ms. Magoun said there is a movement with models for rentals and cooperatives where some money goes into an investment fund that tenants can then take when they leave the property. Ms. Magoun noted that not everyone can be a homeowner, single family home buying has been done in Cumberland but a lot of

people can't afford this. Ms. Magoun feels that the Town is doing a disservice if not paying attention to meeting a range of housing needs. Mr. Doane proposed a condominium type property with thirty to forty units geared to be affordable and to build equity in partnership with the owner, maybe through the Housing Authority.

Ms. Gallaudet said she likes the idea of requiring new developments to have a percentage of starter homes or affordable homes. Ms. Witherill said she is in favor of this. Mr. Doane said the requirement could be to include affordable units or pay a certain amount into a housing fund dedicated to affordable housing. Ms. Gallaudet said there can be a requirement for smaller homes. Mr. Lapping proposed smaller lot sizes. Chair Broder said the Town will see some smaller lots with the State Statute going into effect next year.

Chair Broder said it is important for Task Force members to go to the Oct. 26th Town Council/Planning Board joint workshop.

Councilor Vail suggested offering density increases for projects that have an affordability aspect. Mr. Doane said if the Town requires affordability, this will kill growth because developers can't build something and then sell it at a lower price.

Mr. Doane said if public water is extended in West Cumberland, there could be many units being built there. Chair Broder said the Task Force can look at projects in the Foreside, Town Center, and West Cumberland. Chair Broder said there will need to be a program to create revenue for the Housing Authority to do work.

Mr. Wood asked about the West Cumberland proposal. Ms. Nixon said there is an affordable housing overlay district in the area of the Chase gravel pit where housing is being proposed if the public water can be extended.

Ms. Witherill reported on a cooperative affordable housing project in Portland that will be developed with fifty units of energy efficient homes on small lots on Lambert St.

Discussion was had about the impact to the property tax rate for a proposed new school for MSAD #51. The increase to the property tax rate due to the construction of a new school will likely hinder the Town's ability to raise revenue for municipal projects.

Administrative Matters: The next meeting of the Housing Task Force will be Oct. 25th. Chair Broder expects that subcommittees will put together what they want to see put forward for recommendations and the Task Force will debate what will be included.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.