

TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Michelle Collette
Carolyn Perkins



Meeting Minutes

Date: June 27, 2019
Time: 7 pm
Location: Town Hall, Second Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA
Members: Carolyn Perkins, Michelle Collette
Others: Russell Burke (Planning Board),
Gus Widmayer (Planning Board),
Scott Wilson (Planning Board),
Becky Pine (Select Board and newly appointed member of the Affordable Housing Trust),
Stuart Schulman (Affordable Housing Trust),
Sheila Julien (Affordable Housing Trust),
Colleen Neff (Affordable Housing Trust),
Brooks Lyman (Groton Housing Authority),
Daniel Emerson (Groton Housing Authority),
Karen Chapman (presenter and Principal Planner, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission),
Anna Eliot (past member of Planning Board for 22 years),
Fran Stanley (housing coordinator), and
unnamed others who attended the presentation but did not offer comments or questions.

Meeting handouts: PowerPoint presentation

The Planning Board lacked a quorum. Russell Burke invited the Housing Production Plan kickoff, which was an independently advertised event, to proceed. There was a quorum present for the Affordable Housing Trust as well as the Housing Partnership. Fran Stanley introduced Karen Chapman. Karen Chapman gave a presentation (see attached PowerPoint).

There will be a survey of residents. The online survey will have a paper version that will be distributed to the Groton Public Library, Town Hall, and the Council on Aging.

There will be a draft plan circulated in September. Sign off by the Planning Board and the Select Board is needed before the final document is submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Because the Planning Board lacked a quorum, Russell Burke asked his fellow Planning Board members to ask questions if they chose, but to please refrain from making comments. Russell Burke invited the audience at large to ask questions and/or offer a statement.

Becky Pine said that she is interested in expanding the availability of housing for young adult households and downsizing seniors. She asked about access to funding that might be available to increase that type of housing.

Stuart Schulman commented that Groton's current total of vacant parcels will not be same as the current number of buildable parcels (i.e., the first number is large and the second number is much smaller). Stuart Schulman also suggested that past housing plans such as the Virginia Woods plan (2004) be reviewed as a good foundation for any new plan. Karen Chapman responded that she has received and reviewed both the 2004 plan and the 2011 plan.

Michelle Collette offered two comments. First, she suggested that the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities may have relevant Groton specific data. Karen Chapman responded that she was aware of this resource and had been in contact with this office. Next, Michelle Collette pointed out that Groton's present multifamily bylaw represents a missed opportunity as it is not inclusionary and it requires a concept plan to pass Town Meeting with a 2/3's vote.

Anna Eliot observed that expanding in-law apartment or accessory apartment bylaws could be helpful for people who want to stay in Groton but may have a larger house than they need. Presently, housing lots created by special permit – such as the subdivisions permitted by the Planning Board – are not eligible for expanding or reconfiguring their house lot into houses with in-law apartments. She asked the Planning Board and the current Housing Production Plan planning to explore changes that might allow 20% of large homes to be converted for in-law apartments.

Daniel Emerson commented that from his perspective as a Groton Housing Authority board member, affordable rentals are one of the greatest unmet needs.

Carolyn Perkins commented that Groton is fortunate to have accepted the Community Preservation Act at the 3% level as this tax surcharge generates funds that can be spend on new affordable housing. Karen Chapman responded that this is true and that such local funds from the Community Preservation Committee can be used to leverage outside funding for new projects.

Also, Carolyn Perkins asked that there be an opportunity for public input once all the new data has been collected (statistical, survey data, production plan specific goals). Fran Stanley said that input from the public is welcomed at all times. Karen Chapman had been due to return for one more meeting to present the draft plan, but she offered to make an additional visit to allow for public input on the data. Note that this meeting may bolster confidence that the conclusions drawn from the data are well vetted.

Adjourned 7:45 pm.

Minutes by Fran Stanley