

**Bi-Town Housing Committee and Joint Selectboard Hearing**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Old School Enrichment Center**  
**Monday, November 18, 2019**

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Wilmington Selectboard members present: Tom Fitzgerald, Ann Manwaring, Vince Rice  
Dover Selectboard members present: Vicki Capitani, Joe Mahon, Sarah Shippee

Others present: Gretchen Havreluk, Steve Neratko, Rachel Selsky, Shannon Wheeler, Randy Capitani, Diane Chapman, Lenny Chapman, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Adam Grinold, Lauren Harkawik, Lynn Larson, Jessica Lee Smith, Sue Spengler, Meg Staloff, Meg Streeter, Mary Tarinelli, Ned Wilson

**6:36PM Steve Neratko welcomed attendees and shared history and timeline of this project to date.**

- I. Dover Selectboard called into session at 6:37 PM by Vice Chair, Vicki Capitani.
- II. Wilmington Selectboard called into session at 6:37 PM by Chair, Tom Fitzgerald.
- III. Rachel Selsky from Camoin Associates began housing presentation.
  - a. Camoin is based in Saratoga Springs, NY but Rachel works from Brattleboro.
  - b. They have been involved in other resort town projects with seasonal communities such as Provincetown, Kennebunkport and the Acadia area.
  - c. Challenges around housing are directly related to economic development. Short term rentals are affecting the ability to find housing options for employees.
  - d. (Please see attached/linked materials for presentation slides.)
    - i. Goal #1 slide comments:
      1. Spoke with Windham Windsor Housing Trust. Capacity of funding at the state level is really what's stopped them from being able to do more work here.
    - ii. Goal #2 slide comments:
      1. We heard as businesses invited potential workers and would decide not to take the job.
      2. Improved housing will help with recruitment and retention.
      3. Working with landlords and things like the Groundworks Liaison Program. Helps with finding more willing to rent to different populations than the landlord may not normally rent to.
      4. Build relationships with home improvement services projects. Tax breaks, free advertising, Mount Snow and other large employers to partner with.
    - iii. Goal #3 slide comments:
      1. The housing survey just scratched the surface of what Seniors want.
      2. Help developers with zoning, initial feasibility or pro forma has happened, helping developer RFP. Make it plug and play for them.
      3. Many seniors are not ready to leave their homes. Look at programs like 'Golden Girls' housing, support groups for downsizing and relocation support.
    - iv. Goal #4 slide comments:
      1. Lack of State and Federal funding will really affect this.
      2. Economic development initiatives will help year-round with wages and demand.
- IV. 7:00 PM Presentation complete and opened to questions from Selectboard.
  - a. Ann Manwaring: does the 30% number include utilities, plowing? [Page 6 of slides: 30% of income spent on housing as benchmark]
    - i. Rachel: That is usually gross rent, so major utilities but not landscaping or maintenance.

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- b. Ann Manwaring: In commuters: People we sort of consider living in adjoining towns. I'm assuming we don't have any data that differentiates that level of community from others?
    - i. Rachel: On chart, table 6 [Page 10 in final report] 19% live here and work here, then the outlying towns. Those are the populations that are coming from out of town.
  - c. Ann Manwaring: A lot of the housing entities that you talked about specialize in housing for incomes up to a level and then are subsidized. There are a wide range of incomes above that that are spending more than the 30% on housing. Where there might be services for that population would be interesting.
    - i. Rachel: yes, that would likely be more of what we are talking about for workforce. Not necessarily affordable but it's that middle income that is struggling to find appropriate housing. Like the entry level professional, who can't find appropriate or adequate housing. They are having trouble.
  - d. Ann Manwaring: Dynamic in this community and many others around Vermont that makes people make living decisions based on where their kid will go to school. Wilmington kids don't have the choice to pick any school around like all these other communities do and that's a real issue.
    - i. Rachel: Yes, that's the holistic view of housing. It's all related to the different pieces. Is there somebody to address the school related/education related side so that they could get a more attractive place for people to want to live.
  - e. Tom Fitzgerald: Do you have a list of developers that would be interested in doing projects like this?
    - i. Rachel: I don't.
  - f. Tom Fitzgerald: Only because it's well known that the soft costs are 30% higher than in even Connecticut. A lot of the apartments or housing that's being constructed or considered are in areas that are downtowns. I don't see any housing being built throughout the state. There's nothing in the pipeline for Act 250 at all. Do we have to wait for Windham Windsor Housing Trust to take action? Do we have to make our own authority? Would we be competing with our own selves? Would we be eligible for grants?
    - i. Rachel: Yes, so there's only so much state money and funding so I don't know if that's the best approach to take. You might want to consider as I do think you'd be competing.
    - ii. Tom Fitzgerald: We have limited contact with WWHT; I think it's very frustrating. We want to be proactive if we have to go it alone.
    - iii. Gretchen Havreluk: Elizabeth Bridgewater, the director of WWHT, was going to come tonight. They are interested in doing developing over here.
    - iv. Rachel: It's not a staff issue, it's a finance funding issue. You have to bring projects to them. There's a 3-year pipeline.
    - v. Jessica Lee Smith: It has to go further than that. We're like an ignored area that way. Business owners need this help. I know Brattleboro has a new spot, why do we keep getting passed over?
    - vi. Rachel: If the two towns were able to create a much more targeted advocacy level "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Making big movements then I think what funding is available towards it I think that would definitely get their attention.
- V. No additional Selectboard questions, opened to general questions.
- a. Randy Capitani: A couple of comments. I think these are really sobering statistics. We all have a lot of soul searching and thinking to do. If we want the state's attention, we need to be under

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6 feet of water again. A couple of observations and then a couple of questions. It seems to be instead of waiting for Windham Windsor Housing Trust or the state or grant money if we can create a climate for private developers to come in and rehab or create houses it would be faster and more effective in the long run. How do we find those people? Steve and Gretchen would have their work cut out looking for that. Let's get the major players involved. Looking at what has SVHC done in Bennington with housing? Housing in exchange for commitments to work here. School systems, we always seem to have a lot of turnover in teachers, Mount Snow. Just throwing darts. Let's look beyond the government agencies and solutions. Question would be are major players like Mount Snow on the Housing Committee? Are there representatives from other major employers and sectors in the valley? That's hugely important. Other major employers need to be a part of this conversation too. We could be a huge bedroom community for those towns like Bennington and Brattleboro.

- i. Rachel: It's interesting if they would play a role as they are having their own conversations in Brattleboro and Bennington. Employers are struggling just the same at finding adequate workers. The Moover was an active participant in our study.
  - ii. Randy Capitani: Other groups talking about this, too. SeVEDS finding housing for people in Brattleboro. The Retreat went to Keene and West Chesterfield because they found what they needed affordably. So how do we keep them in Vermont?
  - iii. Rachel: That ties into the holistic approach that includes economic development. Economic development is trying to work regionally so making sure that those conversations at all aspects are happening and how do we do the best for the two towns together
- b. Meg Streeter: any of the other area or towns you mentioned if you encountered any resorts tried to do research on Vail as to what they've done to provide housing aimed at their workforce. Katie Buckley, the last administration's housing commissioner, pushed us on the Old School committee to work with Mount Snow but we couldn't get a conversation going. Maybe we will with new ownership. Looking for other models in resort areas that might be applicable to us.
- i. Rachel: I know there are other resorts that have done it. Not many want to get into the housing business (Meg: Not at the affordable price point) there are, I don't know that there's successful things that people would want to replicate. I suspect more it's emergency things with no other option situation. Provincetown they no longer have a choice so they buy an old inn or a big house and divide it up for employee housing. Not a great situation for a restaurateur who didn't expect to be in the housing business. They have some zoning changes in Provincetown to make it Dorm style housing. That could be a potential option so if a developer came in they'd have a place to put something like that. Setting the regulation and land policy to be more attractive and easy to meet that type of need. Need a more year round economy first before they jump into housing.
- c. Sarah Shippee: If we were talking about trying to incentivize people to build more housing that was affordable for the 18-34 and 65+ groups what price point would we need for the rentals?
- i. Rachel: Pg 28 table 29 of the report: in commuter housing affordability. Monthly earnings assuming 30% spend, lowest is \$375, \$375-\$1000 is per person, not per household.
  - ii. Sarah: If we said to a developer we want you to build 15 units, rents have to be \$x. What would that be?

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- iii. Rachel: The middle to lower end of the chart.
- d. Mary Tarinelli: We own land and lots in Wilmington. I went this Spring to the fire district. We have an overlook along the golf course in Haystack. I think we have 45 or 48 lots. I said it's time for affordable housing. We've been paying for the fire district hookups for 30 years. I was told there was no hookups, I would have to put them in from Mann Rd to Overlook – for my 45 units and all 80 units there because it's not there. There goes my 1,000 sq ft handicap accessible units as they asked for \$300k in infrastructure. I decided to go over to my 20 acres on the access road. Water's already going there, this should be easy. My goal was 10-15 units. I don't want to get rich doing this but I can't afford the projects and putting in the infrastructure. That I've already been paying for. Town must start with their programs and problems first. You're discouraging anyone from doing anything.
  - i. Rachel: Yes, identifying where those barriers are and are there levers that can be pulled to help incentivize. Is it the type of housing that we're looking for? Is it a priority? And what can do to incentivize.
  - ii. Mary: Yes, I thought it was a great idea but I can't do this and all the infrastructure.
- e. Adam Grinold: Can you speak to the nexus between the number of in commuters and how that's driving some of the conclusions. Is there an assumption that a percentage would move here? Or does that assumption only apply it's a certain length of commute?
  - i. Rachel: A small percent would move here if they had an available option. I don't know if we looked at the length as a number.
  - ii. Adam: So what else driving that number?
  - iii. Rachel: Those looking to be on their own in the 18-34 and those 65+ in group quarters.
- f. Meg Streeter: The price range you cited for most houses in Wilmington and Dover: did you just average the grand list values for the number of residences and condos? For the costs and values of the houses?
  - i. Rachel: That's reporting from the American Community survey report on what those median household values are.

**VI. With no additional community questions, Rachel suggested the next steps:**

- a. Would work with Gretchen, Steve and the Bi-Town Housing Committee to address concerns. The next step action map includes partners and priority levels, please let those people know so we can refine the report.
- b. Next priority steps would be the Bi-Town housing make short term steps that they can start to take who can they bring in to the conversation, who they can delegate to, who can they engage to help move this project along. Being able to demonstrate that you are taking this seriously and will get others to take it seriously as well. The committee needs to take the leadership of this. Stand behind it and work behind it in the next 5-10 years. Definitely some short term steps that you're willing to make progress on is a really important first step.
- c. Randy Capitano: It seems like some of your next steps need to make this presentation into a road show? I don't know who takes that on, if it's the economic development directors or you. Coldbrook doesn't know. North Branch in Dover doesn't know about this. Mount Snow doesn't know. How do you get them involved? That's the solution we have to find.
- d. Rachel: We did talk to Mount Snow in an interview, just so you know.
- e. Mary Tarinelli: If you don't have the infrastructure, you don't address that major problem how do you expect any developer to come and make it affordable?

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- f. Rachel: if you identify a site for a local or other developer, you want it to be plug and play you want zoning aligned with permits are taken as far as can be. Costs for that time can be taken out, setting someone up for success. Limiting the unpredictability that can sometimes come with developing.

**VII.** Dover Selectboard: Vicki moves to adjourn at 7:27 PM, Sarah Shippee seconds.

**VIII.** Wilmington Selectboard: Tom moves to adjourn at 7:27 PM, Ann seconds.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Wheeler  
Economic Development Assistant, Town of Dover