

**TOWN OF ESSEX / CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
JOINT HOUSING COMMISSION
Minutes of February 15, 2023**

City Representatives: Katie Ballard, Chair (left at 4:02pm); Gabrielle Smith, Vice Chair; Ned Daly, Tanisha Redditta.

Town Representatives: Emily Taylor, Clerk; Rupesh Asher; Deb Flannery; Mark Redmond.

Administration and Staff: Kent Johnson, Regina Mahoney, Katherine Sonnick, Chris Yuen.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ballard called the meeting to order at 3:09 PM. There were no proposed changes to the agenda.

2. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

Gina Marden from the Essex Enquirer is present.

3. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Approval of Minutes

Taylor made a motion, seconded by Redmond, to approve the minutes of January 18, 2023. The motion passed 8-0.

b. Housing Trust Fund discussion

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is working with Williston on their implementation of a Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and that community could be a resource to work with. The Joint Housing Commission (HC) would need to be specific in our requests for support from them and hope to collaborate more after the HC hosts public engagement sessions.

The Town and the City are both interested in having a HTF though after separation, the Town will likely need a year before the municipality can move it forward. The Town's and the City's commissions will work closely together, even after separation, on similar goals so it will make sense to collaborate with Williston as a Joint Commission. Not only will the Town need to determine leadership structure for their Commission, but the City will as well since the Clerk is currently a Town representative and the Joint Commission's chair will be up for reappointment. Smith was reappointed to her seat on the Joint Housing Commission for a three year term in 2022.

The Selectboard and City Council would like as much community feedback incorporated into a HTF proposal as possible, which would be a public engagement session topic. Smith offered that hearing feedback or looking at the process the conservation fund used to obtain feedback could be helpful. Ballard agreed and referenced the process the Town Plan 2024 workgroup used for community outreach sessions.

[In HTF presentations done in the past, ten potential uses for the Fund were outlined](#) and compiled from research, existing municipal Trust Funds, and feedback from providers who have experience using a HTF. Ballard would like the HC to begin narrowing down the list outlined on slides five and six in the linked presentation to get community feedback. Feedback to narrow down the list of potential funds would be to look at areas that would have the highest impact, address homelessness prevention, and engage the community in providing feedback. At the same time,

good ideas that haven't been proven yet to have impact shouldn't be dismissed. Smith offered context that the HTF group talked about establishing the Fund but not accessing finances through it for a few years until the funds could build up over time. Ballard reflected this back to community engagement and noted that in addition to in person settings, an electronic survey or group of basic questions could be asked for anyone who doesn't want to publicly share challenges they've experienced. Smith advocated that questions around the HTF should be specific and not tied to general housing needs as the HC has a handle on what those are for now. Ballard clarified that to get community feedback, we'd need to provide context for the HTF, where similar funds are in use now, what it would be used for, and what community members' priorities would be.

The HC discussed the ten topics through the lens of what the two municipalities would be able to do realistically, and what taking on each project would look like when determining what items to prioritize or not. With this in mind, Smith asked staff to compile and report out probability of municipal capacity for each item for the March 1, 2023 meeting. The HTF will be on the March 1 agenda. The HC made progress talking about each item and grouping related topics together, and hope to build on this conversation at the March 1 HC meeting.

c. Update on Town Plan workgroup

There was no update provided today on the Town Plan workgroup.

d. Update on Rental Registry in the City

Mahony updated that the City continues to think about implementing a rental registry and inspection program. The City has more capacity to do long term planning and are starting with housing as a priority. They are also looking forward to presentations on Inclusionary Zoning and the HTF coming from the HC that the City can take over. The Registry is a way the City can get ahead of rental and safety issues and removes responsibility from individual rental tenants reporting issues. The City also has an additional staff person in the Community Development office who could take this on, as well as incorporating the Health Office.

The next Planning Commission meeting is on March 9, 2023 and there will be a discussion on this topic as well. Ballard and Daly will attend.

e. Update on Just Cause Eviction (if applicable)

There was no update provided today on the Just Cause Eviction ordinance discussion.

f. Discussion around dates for Public Engagement

This agenda item will be discussed at the March 1, 2023 meeting.

4. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

The Joint Housing Commission welcomes Chris Yuen to the meeting today. Yuen is the City's new Community Development Director and started just last week. He will be working with the HC, on housing and planning issues, and furthering community development in the City.

5. READING FILE

a. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Ballard will not be able to make the March 1, 2023 Housing Commission meeting. Smith will chair the meeting to continue conversations on the HTF and Public Engagement. At this time, it appears the Commission will have quorum.

6. ADJOURN

Smith adjourned the meeting at 4:28pm.

Minutes prepared and submitted by Emily Taylor, Clerk.