

Small Town Housing Work Group

May 26, 2021 Meeting Notes

[Meeting held via Zoom]

In attendance: MJ Adams (Greenfield), Andrew Baker (Shelburne), Barbara Carulli (Leverett), Lili Dwight (Deerfield), Gina Govoni (FCRHRA / RDI), David Greenberg (Colrain), Ken Kahn (Leverett), Mariah Kurtz (Erving), Katy Lacy (MHP), Alyssa Larose (FRCOG), Lily Linke (CHAPA), Mary McClintock (Conway / CAPV), Megan McDonough (PVHH and Colrain), Walter Ramsey (Montague), Otis Wheeler (Greenfield), Susan Worgaftik (Greenfield), Jen Audley, FRCOG/Improving Housing to Improve Health (IH2) and Montague (notes)

Guests:

Bill Reyelt (DHCD), Chris Rembold (Great Barrington), Shelly Goehring (MHP)
Chris Rembold <crembold@Townofgb.org>;
Reyelt, William (OCD) <william.reyelt@state.ma.us>;
Shelly Goehring <SGoehring@mhp.net>

Alyssa Larose welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the topics on the agenda for the meeting:

1. 40R zoning & development (Bill Reyelt and Chris Rembold)
2. Updates from Alyssa Larose and other work group members including upcoming events, changes to Housing Choice
3. Municipal Affordable Housing Trusts (Shelly Goehring and Barbara Carulli)

1. 40R Zoning

Bill Reyelt gave an overview of the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act (Ch. 40R), including eligibility and affordability requirements, financial incentives for municipalities, a look at where districts have been approved and results statewide, and the process for creating these overlay district.

Slides: 40R-SG+SHZD_20overview_(FRCOG-STHWG_05.27.2021).pdf

Survey of 40R districts: 40R_Districts-Activity_Summary_(05.26.21).pdf

- 40R includes provisions for Smart Growth and Starter Home districts; the guidelines for each are related but not identical.
- There are no approved 40R districts in Franklin County (yet); DCHD has not yet received any applications for Starter Home districts.
- Smart Growth zoning is “hard to achieve without” sewer and water service; Starter Home zoning might be possible for clustered housing with shared septic.

Chris Rembold, assistant town manager for Great Barrington (pop 7000, has water and sewer), described that town's experience with creating three 40R overlay districts.

Slides: 40_Rgreat_barrington.pdf

- 40R zoning allowed them to “know what we’d get in the places where we wanted it” (in contrast to 40B development)
- Process started with 2013 Master Plan, zoning bylaw passed 2017 “after about a year”, has brought about \$550,000 of incentive funding to town, which is being used for infrastructure improvements (e.g. sidewalks), potential for 500 40R units in 3 districts.
- First project (49 units/45 affordable) approved Nov 2018, funded and ready to build in 2021.

FRCOG may be able to assist with exploring these options for your town; contact Alyssa to discuss possible technical assistance.

2. Updates

40A Housing Choice updates: After Katy Lacy's presentation to this group in Feb 2021, the group agreed that a follow-up on the Housing Choice changes would be helpful at the next meeting as more information became available. Alyssa Larose showed a summary of this most recent guidance from the State: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/housing-choice-and-mbta-communities-legislation#voting-threshold-guidance>

Alyssa shared information about several upcoming events:

- June 3, 10, 17, 1:00 to 4:30 pm – Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) Housing Institute <https://www.mhp.net/news/2021/register-now-for-mhps-housing-institute>
- June 4, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm – MAPC Housing Choice Webinar Series: Getting to Yes: Zoning Under Housing Choice https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_heKagomAStarybwwnqprVw
- June 14, 6:00 pm - Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) – Working with 40B <http://masscptc.org/>
- July 28, 1:30 – 3:00 pm – Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) Virtual Regional Meeting for Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties <https://www.chapa.org/events>

Mariah Kurtz described the housing stakeholders meeting that Erving is holding on June 2, with support from CHAPA and its Municipal Engagement Initiative, in conjunction with the IH2 project. The goal is to open up discussion about housing needs in Erving. Work group members are invited to attend. Contact Mariah mariah.kurtz@erving-ma.gov or Lily Linke lilinke@chapa.org for more information.

Walter Ramsey noted that Montague will do something similar later in the summer “following Erving's lead on this.”

3. Municipal Affordable Housing Trusts

Barbara Carulli spoke about the Town of Leverett's experience with creating and operating its own Affordable Housing Trust

- Trust was established in 2007; first transfer from CPC (CPA funds) was in 2008.
- Since then, all funds coming in have been from CPC, with most for designated programmatic uses; because some of the programs Leverett developed initially have since been stalled by lack of housing inventory, some of the funds in the trust are tied up, but the initial deposit is a "stash of cash" that could be used for purposes such as legal fees, studies, etc.
- For example, they are exploring purchasing a small piece of land for a Habitat building project.
- CPC funds do not have to go through a trust; they can go directly to developer. (For example, PV Habitat for Humanity has applied to CPC in several towns for funding. Mary McClintock noted that Conway has an article on its upcoming Annual Town Meeting warrant to provide \$45,000 towards a Habitat home in Conway.)
- CPC uses have to go through approval process (CPC committee and Town Meeting), but CPC funds in Trust have already been through that process, so may be more readily available. This can shorten the timeline to execute projects.

Shelly Goehring of the MHP provided an overview of the process by which a municipality creates a Housing Trust, and described a variety of ways that municipalities in MA have set up, funded, and used MAHTs. She also gave some recommendations for best practices and her slides include many examples of things MAHTs have been able to accomplish

Slides: [FRCOG_Small_towns_052621.pdf](#)

- While CPA revenue is a common source of funds for MAHTs, municipalities have found numerous ways to fund MAHTs
- Helpful to have clarity upfront about housing needs/priorities, and about roles and responsibilities of MAHT, CPC, Planning Board, Selectboard, etc
- Most successful trusts have some paid administrative support and a clear understanding of their operating approach (funder/initiator/advocate) and activities (acquire/create/preserve/support)
- MAHTs and Community Housing Trusts are different types of entities, with different powers
- MAHTs can support regional projects (for example, multiple towns funded recent affordable housing development on Cape Cod.)

Meetings are quarterly on the 4th Wednesday of the month from 5:00 – 6:30 pm. Next meeting will be on August 25, 5-6:30pm, location tbd. Please contact Alyssa at alarose@frcog.org with meeting topic ideas.