

Meeting Notes



Small Town Housing Working Group

Date: Thursday, June 30, 2022

Time: 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Location: Remote

Meeting Slides: https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/STHWG_06-30-2022-Meeting-Presentation-3.pdf

Staff Contact: Andrea Donlon, adonlon@frcog.org (413)774-3167 (ext. 127)

Working Group Webpage: <https://frcog.org/chip/ih2/small-town-housing-workgroup/>

Next meetings will be September 29 (5:30-7:00) and November TBD

Attendees: Andrea Donlon (FRCOG / Buckland Planning Board), Alyssa Larose (FCRHRA/RDI / Greenfield), Mary McClintock (Community Action / Conway), David Greenberg (Colrain Planning Board/ FC Community Land Trust / FCCPR), Susan Worgaftik (Greening Greenfield / Greenfield CPC), Judy Atkins (Greenfield / FCCLT), Marybeth Chichester (Colrain Planning Board / FRPB Executive Committee), Catherine Wolkowicz (Whately CPC & Housing Committee), Jerry Lund (FRPB Executive Committee/ Leyden), Birdie Champ (Charlemont Planning Board), Martin Omasta (FCCLT / Hatfield), MJ Adams (Greenfield Community & Economic Development), Kenneth Kuttner (Williamstown Planning Board), Hannah Davis (Whately Community Development), Jen Audley (FRCOG / Montague)

Short Term Rentals –

Andrea Donlon reviewed a FRCOG report on trends in Franklin County trends from 2019 to mid-2022, including #s and local option tax revenues.

The slides are here: https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/STHWG_06-30-2022-Meeting-Presentation-3.pdf

The slides were edited to include information and clarify points that came up during group discussion.

The report is here: [Memo and report on short term rentals 05-10-22 \(frcog.org\)](#)

This report was sent to all Franklin County town administrators in May 2022.

Other notes:

- With a few exceptions, owners are now required to register short-term rentals with the Commonwealth (Department of Revenue), and pay a state excise tax as with other forms of lodging.
- As of April, there were 223 short-term rentals in Franklin County. The numbers change frequently, but there has been a 47% increase since July of 2019.
- Municipalities can choose to impose a local excise tax. Municipalities that have adopted a local excise tax of up to 6% may also impose an additional community impact fee of 3%. So far, Leverett is the only town to have opted for the community impact fee.
- The excise tax revenue flows into local receipts and supports the general fund; the impact fee revenue has defined uses, including a provision that at least 35% is allocated to affordable housing.
- There is a housing deficit in Franklin County currently. While it is unknown how many short-term rentals could also be year-round housing, it's likely short-term rentals are having some impact on housing in the region.
- A question came up about who is responsible for registering at DOR. Information about registration, fees, etc. for MA hosts, from Airbnb's help center:
<https://www.airbnb.com/help/article/2587/occupancy-tax-collection-and-remittance-by-airbnb-in-massachusetts>
- April 2019 Technical Information Release from MA: <https://www.mass.gov/technical-information-release/tir-19-3-changes-to-the-room-occupancy-excise-in-an-act-regulating-and-insuring-short-term-rentals>

News, Announcements, Updates

Alyssa Larose (alarose@fcrhra.org) –

The application deadline for Sanderson Place, RDI's new Sunderland senior housing, has passed (Applications are still being accepted for the waitlist.) "Pretty good" # of applications received, now processing them to determine eligibility. Lottery scheduled for 7/20, move-in this fall. This is the first affordable senior housing development in Franklin County in many years!

MHP awarded 6 towns in our region a Complete Neighborhoods grant, which provides targeted technical assistance and \$250,000 to "mobility hubs." (We discussed this opportunity at our March 2022 STHWG meeting.) Orange, Montague, Erving, Greenfield, Whatley, and Deerfield are the towns involved. Greenfield was the lead applicant. Kick-off meeting 7/1/22.

RDI has been approached about becoming a receiver for the for AGO's Neighborhood Renewal program by Greenfield and the FRCOG, and RDI recently applied for funding through the MA CHHA funds to support that initiative.

Judy Atkins / David Greenberg / Martin Omasta –

Franklin County Community Land Trust is now a 501(c)3 non-profit entity with a bank account. They are looking for “easy things to start with” to make an impact, need to raise \$, interested in collaborating with other organizations and towns. One idea is to offer downpayment assistance. Focus on maintaining affordability that is defined in terms of what people can actually afford and on longer-term investment (99 years). They modeled the organization from similar groups in Burlington, VT (Champlain Community Land Trust) and Brattleboro, VT. They, are in contact with other land trusts in the area, including Amherst Community Land Trust, but not Valley Community Land Trust as they “seem to not want to expand.” They have a slideshow introducing the project– would like to share it at the next meeting of this group.

In the chat, there was an explanation of the difference between a land trust and a community land trust: “land trusts are for conservation purposes and community land trusts are for taking housing off of the speculative market and maintaining affordability”

Montague –

Has begun working with FRCOG on updating its comprehensive plan, which will include housing goals. Website is here: <https://montagueplans.org/>

Currently surveying people who reside or work in Montague – [English](#) version / [Spanish](#) version

Legislative Updates

Susan Worgaftik (suworg1@gmail.com) provided these.

- Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), An Act to guarantee a tenant's first right of refusal, (S890/H.1426) -- is enabling legislation that will create a local option for tenants to have right of first refusal under certain circumstances. The legislation has been modified and made it out of Committee, which means it will go to a vote in this session. In the last session it was vetoed by the governor at the last minute – too late for the legislators to override.
- Local Option Transfer Fee on Sales of High-End Homes to Build Affordable Housing: An Act empowering cities and towns to impose a fee on certain real estate transactions to support

affordable housing (S.868/H.1377) – this is enabling legislation that would allow municipalities to collect 0.5-2% on sales of property – just the portion above the county median – and use it for affordable housing. The statewide legislation is still with the Revenue Committee – several individual towns have initiated their own versions and those are going to the floor. (The individual towns are not in our area.)

- Right to Counsel in Evictions: An Act promoting housing stability and homelessness prevention in Massachusetts (S.874/H.1436). This bill has been sent to study, so it will not move forward in this legislative session.

What's Next for the Small Town Housing Working Group?

Background: Because only a handful of Franklin County towns have a professional planner on staff and the region's Regional Planning Agency (FRCOG) is involved in a wide array of projects, Alyssa Larose (formerly FRCOG staff) convened this group in 2018 in recognition of the need for opportunities for planning board members, planners, and other municipal staff to learn about and collaborate on housing-related projects. This group helped build the case for the creation of a Regional Housing Coordinator role at the FRCOG and laid some of the groundwork for a successful application to the MA Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds for the [Improving Housing to Improve Health \(IH2\) project](#).

Now, Alyssa has moved to RDI in a new role that significantly increases regional capacity for affordable housing development, and has been replaced at the FRCOG by Andrea Donlon, the newest Senior Planner in the Land Use and Natural Resources group and also a member of the Buckland Planning Board. IH2 funding can support the FRCOG's continued facilitation of the group and we had a brief informal discussion about what that might look like, launched by these questions:

- What has worked well/not well?
- Future meeting topics?
- Who else should be included in these meetings?
- Future meeting structure?
- Meeting time/frequency?
- Continue in remote format?

Those present expressed interest in:

- Continuing with a model grounded in peer-to-peer learning – that includes bringing experts and guest speakers on housing-related topics to the group and also learning from one another.

- Focusing on increasing Community Preservation Act funds and other sources of revenue that could potentially be pooled
- Opportunities to collaborate and share resources
- Renovation/reuse of existing buildings
- Outreach/invitations to all Planning Board members and housing champions in the region
- Potential shift to a more formal committee structure
- Meeting more frequently - bi-monthly starting in September
- Continue with the same meeting time and remote format, with an occasional (once/year?) in-person gathering, perhaps at a housing site of interest

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter
5:30 pm	1. Introductions	Group
5:40 pm	2. Housing News, Announcements, and Community Updates	Group
6:00 pm	3. Summary of short term rentals in Franklin County towns 2019-2022, trends and local option tax. Click here for the report.	Andrea Donlon (FRCOG)
6:30 pm	4. Informal assessment of this small town housing working group into the future – what has worked well, what could be done better, future meeting topics/structure (To review topics, agendas, and minutes from meetings since 2019, click here.)	Facilitated by Andrea Donlon (FRCOG) and Alyssa Larose (FCRHRA/RDI)
6:45 pm	5. Upcoming Meetings: Schedule, Agenda	Group
7:00 pm (or earlier)	6. Adjourn	Group