



Meeting Notes

Small Town Housing Working Group

Date: Thursday, March 16, 2023

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

Location: Remote

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

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

Upcoming meeting dates: May 18, July 20 (field trip/in person?), September 21, November 16 (all Thursdays 5:30-7 PM)

Recording of the meeting and the chat (Available on demand for 30 days after the meeting; then by request)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/3J4qGg3wlqx5ikJWsJIn-OuTiSPcbQaVi1eoXm5sePbZZbq0oc0kMKYKFtWMYhET.Xw1DEdckw1LP4enS>

Passcode: STH:031623

Attendees:

Jen Audley (FRCOG/CHIP, Montague)	Susan Worgaftik (Housing Greenfield, Greenfield CPC)
Mike Shaffer (former Erving PB, FRPB)	Gina Govoni (HRA/RDI)
Christina Wysk and the Bernardston MA Planning Board	Megan Rhodes (FRCOG)
Christine Madore (MHP)	Mary McClintock (Conway, Housing Greenfield)
Monica Keel (CHAPA)	Laura Shufelt (MHP staff)
Lili Dwight (Deerfield)	Alyssa Larose (HRA/RDI staff)
David Greenberg (Colrain PB, FCCLT)	Nevin Murray (FCCLT)
Megan McDonough (PV Habitat for Humanity)	Mariah Kurtz (Erving Planner)
Andrea Donlon (FRCOG, Buckland PB)	Dana LeWinter (CHAPA)
	Jerry Lund (Leyden, FRPB)

After introductions, Andrea started off the meeting letting everyone know that the first two agenda items were going to swap order, with MHP going first.

I. Mass Housing Partnership (MHP) – Ongoing work in Franklin County

Christine Madore and Laura Shufelt of MHP joined us and gave an overview of MHP programs and an update on the Complete Neighborhoods Partnership Program. For the Complete Neighborhoods Program, MHP is managing \$40 million in funding for technical assistance over 5 years (2022-2026) focused on increasing affordable housing in walkable communities. This program will invite applications for another round of funding

in 2023! (More details here, scroll down past the part about MBTA communities)

<https://www.mhp.net/community/complete-neighborhoods-initiative>. MHP is also working with DHCD to make recommendations for a \$50 million allocation in the economic development bill for capital investment in affordable housing.

In our area, MHP is working with 6 towns that applied together (with help from Alyssa Larose) as a region in 2022 and were funded in the first round of the Complete Neighborhoods program. Each town has a project and there is a FRCOG project. As of this date, all but Orange had gotten to the point of having a signed contract for their specific project. The program does not give towns funding, but instead hires a contractor to perform work that supports the identified needs of each town. The Complete Neighborhoods program involves the following projects:

- Greenfield – Architect study to explore conversion of upper level vacant space to apartment units, and building a new floor for apartments at two privately owned properties on Main Street. This project involves a possible conversion of parking lot.
- Montague – Zoning changes needed to support a “village plan” that includes housing on Montague City Road, on the site of privately-owned hospital complex (Farren Care Center) that will become town property after demolition.
- Deerfield – Looking at senior housing on municipally-owned property in South Deerfield near the library and other amenities, a “municipal campus plan.”
- Erving – Re-release of an RFP for senior housing at One Care Drive (near library and Senior Center).
- Whately – Development potential and due diligence for site called the Demaio property, where building burned down some time ago.
- Orange – TBD
- FRCOG – assessment of zoning in the 6 towns, and a toolkit based on MHP’s Housing Toolkit, featuring options that are feasible/available to Franklin County towns. Additional work by FRCOG staff will look at non-Complete Neighborhoods towns.

Nevin Murray asked for clarification about who could apply for the technical assistance. Christine said that they anticipate that most applications will come from municipal staff, but the key criteria for a successful application is local support and capacity. A housing cooperative could apply.

Lili Dwight noted that MHP plays a role in the TA grants that significantly reduces the need for hands-on work from municipal staff. That grant management was a key for Deerfield’s participation, where staff capacity is a challenge.

Susan Worgaftik expressed interest in learning more about the scope of work for the FRCOG’s regional zoning assessment, and Andrea/Megan R will follow up.

Laura Shufelt wanted to clarify a misconception that has come up about DHCD and senior housing. DHCD wants senior and family housing to be “balanced,” but if a community has a demonstrated need for senior housing and has not yet built any affordable senior housing, they would support a senior housing proposal without requiring the community to add family housing units first.

Links to other MHP programs:

Center for Community Assistance - <https://www.mhp.net/community>

Center for Housing Data - <https://www.mhp.net/about-us/data>

Homeowner lending (ONE Mortgage) <https://www.mhp.net/one-mortgage>

Financing for multi-family rental properties <https://www.mhp.net/rental-financing>

II. Everything you always wanted to know about Rural Development Inc. (RDI)

Gina Govoni and Alyssa Larose presented. The slides are linked here:

https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/RDI_STHWG_3-16-23-presentation.pdf

Gina and Alyssa explained that the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) was formed in 1973 and is the only regional housing authority in the state. They are also a redevelopment authority. HRA does housing education and manages housing. RDI was organized in 1991 as a nonprofit arm of HRA to develop affordable housing.

Some examples of ways HRA/RDI partners on projects:

- Coordinated application process for 6-town application to MHP’s Complete Neighborhoods Program
- Consulting with CSO on 360 Wells St expansion/renovation
- Sponsor of Sanderson Place senior housing project (now fully occupied!)
- On deck to be Franklin County’s first nonprofit receiver that renovates property Greenfield recommended for the AGO’s Neighborhood Renewal program this spring.

HRA recently merged with Shelburne Housing Authority, a multi-year process that required legislation and reconfiguration of the HRA Board. Susan Worgaftik is on the Board and Mary McClintock will be soon.

Mary McClintock commented on scarcity of ADA-accessible affordable units, and Gina agreed and noted that in many cases developers meet the minimum standard on this; at Sanderson Place all units are visitable by wheelchair users. She also noted that in properties where residents have support/care needs, RDI/HRA does not fill the service provider role – that would be another partner. Some places do both - for example, at the Wells St shelter, CSO will be the property manager and the service provider.

Susan Worgaftik appreciated the way RDI engages with community – also notes that preserving diversity of housing types (for example, on Hope Street) is of interest.

Nevin Murray asked for more on what “refinancing” or “recapitalizing” a project such as Crocker/Cutlery means. Gina explained that the buildings need significant renovation, accessibility and energy improvements that have been deferred. MHP has provided financing that has filled the gap, but they will need to refinance to fund the renovations needed.

Jen Audley asked who the other players in the affordable housing development space in our area are. Gina named Community Builders (bigger projects, such as the redevelopment of the Wilson’s building in Greenfield), PV Habitat for Humanity (homeownership – see below), Valley CDC (involved in Sanderson Place project). Private developers are not currently doing affordable housing projects in this region.

III. Updates from around Franklin County

Megan McDonough shared that Montague selected Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity as developer of 6 single family units on a town-owned parcel on First St. Noted that one way the Habitat model keeps costs down is by using volunteer labor – that project will be looking for community volunteers in 2024. The single family house they are building in Conway is on track to get its certificate of occupancy this spring.

Lili Dwight asked for suggestions to pass along to a community member who houses very low income people – several people said they would follow up.

Susan Worgaftik let everyone know that the Greenfield Community Preservation Committee voted to give funding to the CSO project on Wells Street.

Monica Keel and Dana LeWinter let everyone know that if folks are interested in help to build coalitions of support around housing, anyone can reach out to them. Dana shared a link to CHAPA’s legislative priorities.

Jen Audley gave a brief update on housing-related legislation. In particular, she said that the Regional Affordable Housing Trust bill had been sent to the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government. People are encouraged to write letters to committee chairs requesting that the bill have a hearing; western MA legislators in chair roles of this committee include Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa and Senator Jake Oliveira.

Original posted agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter
5:30 pm	1. Welcome	

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter
5:35 pm	2. Everything you always wanted to know about... Rural Development, Inc.! <i>What it is, origins, work completed in the past, present, and anticipated for the future. Plenty of time for Q&A.</i>	Alyssa Larose & Gina Govoni (HRA/HDI)
6:20 pm	3. Massachusetts Housing Partnership: What they do, and what they are working on in Franklin County	Christine Madore & Laura Shufelt (MHP)
6:35 pm	4. Updates around Franklin County and at the state level (legislation, budget, Healey Administration)	Group
7:00 pm	6. Adjourn	Group