



## Meeting Notes

# Small Town Housing Working Group

**Date:** Thursday, May 18, 2023

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

**Location:** Remote

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

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

**Upcoming meeting dates:** 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 **until June 30**, then by request)

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/5NTjKjps2\\_MXcHAL-HREmnuUhXH\\_R8\\_z9ST4CSzKKvZ3IBxKtTaLr3VPh6b4blsx.nTpkxVY8vT7YWWRW](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/5NTjKjps2_MXcHAL-HREmnuUhXH_R8_z9ST4CSzKKvZ3IBxKtTaLr3VPh6b4blsx.nTpkxVY8vT7YWWRW)

Passcode: STHWH:051823

### Attendees:

Jen Audley (FRCOG/CHIP, Montague)	Susan Worgaftik (Housing Greenfield, Greenfield CPC)
Richard Nathhorst (Leverett PB)	Gina Govoni (HRA/RDI)
Will Flanders (Shelburne PB)	Mary McClintock (Conway, Housing Greenfield)
Denise Mason (Deerfield PB)	Ken Kuttner (Williamstown PB)
Monica Keel (CHAPA)	Alyssa Larose (HRA/RDI staff)
Lili Dwight (Deerfield)	Nevin Murray (FCCLT)
David Greenberg (Colrain PB, FCCLT)	Marybeth Chichester (Colrain PB)
Jerry Lund (Leyden, FRPB)	Cate Wolkowicz, (Whately CPC)
Andrea Donlon (FRCOG, Buckland PB)	Sari Hoy (Sheffield PB)
Megan McDonough (PV Habitat for Humanity)	Kathy Orlando (Sheffield Housing Commission)

### Town Meeting round-up

#### I. Shelburne: **affordable housing at town-owned properties** zoning change

Will Flanders described a change to the Shelburne zoning bylaws advanced by the Planning Board to allow for affordable housing on town-owned, undersized lots. The proposal experienced no resident “no pushback” at the hearing, and the measure easily passed at their recent Annual Town Meeting, now awaiting Attorney General’s approval. The town recently acquired properties through tax-taking, and the existing houses had to be demolished. (Details on p. 8 of Shelburne Town Newsletter here:

[https://www.townofshelburne.com/files/2023-04\\_ShelburneMA\\_Newsletter.pdf](https://www.townofshelburne.com/files/2023-04_ShelburneMA_Newsletter.pdf)). There may still be permitting challenges w/r/t sewer and water, but if lots are developable, next step would be for the Selectboard to release an RFP. There is no particular development or developer in mind at this time.

Megan McDonough noted that having a local zoning mechanism in place for small projects could be very helpful for a developer like Habitat for Humanity, as applying for a permit under 40B is a complicated and cumbersome process.

Changes available for review on the Town Meeting Warrant 2023, which is available at the bottom of this page: <https://www.townofshelburne.com/g/42/Selectboard>

## II. Deerfield: CPA funding for **senior housing & accessory dwelling units** zoning change

Lili Dwight described a proposal to allocate Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to site design and purchase of property in South Deerfield that would support the development of a “municipal campus” with senior housing in the heart of the downtown area. Town Meeting voters approved to use CPA money for this project; she reported no negative public comments. Because their Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meets only once a year, this lays the groundwork for their consideration and vote, and “tees up” decisions that will be made at a Fall Special Town Meeting.

Although Deerfield has 72 units of senior housing already, they are market rate and recent resident surveys demonstrated demand for more affordable senior housing as well as support for this specific location.

Denise Mason then described changes to the zoning bylaws concerning Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) that were approved at town meeting, with some discussion. In Deerfield, 45% of residents are >55 years of age, and this change increases the opportunities for property owners to generate income and age in place while adding units to the town’s inventory. The by-laws were changed to remove restrictions so that now ADUs can be rented to unrelated and younger tenants (previously, the bylaws only allowed attached ADUs for care of an elder). One attached ADU is now allowed by right in owner-occupied properties; detached units are allowed with a special permit. There is a 900 square feet max, 2 bedroom max, off-street parking, no Short-Term Rentals.

Pushback on this happened prior to Town Meeting on social media; concerns raised at Town Meeting were mostly about student tenants and that number of occupants. Alyssa Larose noted occupancy numbers are better addressed through the health code, rather than putting a limit on the number of occupants.

There was interest in incentives/costs for renovations or development of ADUs amongst meeting participants. Andrea Donlon noted that CPA funds could be used for building ADUs for affordable rentals, and she is doing more research on this topic. Vermont has a program that provides \$50K to owners to build ADUs, in exchange for a 5-year restriction commitment to rent at affordable prices; there was a similar program in Auburn, Maine. Will Flanders was the attorney for a developer who recently completed a project in Northampton that group members mentioned as an example.

Information from Alyssa Larose (after the meeting): HRA’s Home Modification Loan Program can be used to help finance an ADU for homeowners with a senior or disabled household member. More information is here: <https://fcrhra.org/programs/home-modification-loan-program-hmlp/>

<https://backyardadus.com/> was suggested as a builder

<https://www.deerfieldma.us/> Town website for information about these projects, committees involved, etc.

### III. Williamstown: **manufactured housing/mobile homes** zoning change

Ken Kuttner of the Williamstown Planning Board described their effort to amend zoning by-laws to allow manufactured homes and differentiate that construction method from mobile homes, which are already allowed in an overlay district. He prepared a slideshow that explains the in detail, and the slides include links to resources.

At their ATM, the zoning bylaws were amended to support housing diversity and affordability in several ways (reduced frontage, triplexes and fourplexes allowed) but the proposal to allow manufactured homes fell 4 votes short of the necessary 2/3 majority. (Number of voters in attendance was about 350.) A realtor spoke at length against the proposal, but overall, support for this exceeded expectations, and Ken feels optimistic about a future effort.

There was a question about how manufactured homes are assessed and taxed, and it was clarified that if they are built on a permanent foundation, they would be considered real property. Megan McDonough noted that that manufactured homes are not necessarily inferior in quality to stick-built homes: “A manufactured home can be a step up compared to a sub-standard stick built home that is in poor repair. People don't always have a lot of options and just need somewhere to live.”

Ken’s slideshow will be posted on the STHWG webpage is linked here:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Ccbd4FISCYdzhhn0ZKMx0AkBcDthQdCbfDuD4po8hww/edit?usp=share\\_link](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Ccbd4FISCYdzhhn0ZKMx0AkBcDthQdCbfDuD4po8hww/edit?usp=share_link)

### **CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative (MEI)**

Monica Keel let us know that CHAPA has opened the application window for communities to apply to join the MEI program, but because Franklin County towns are already engaged with MEI through Improving Housing to Improve Health they can work with the program without going through the application process. Communities outside of Franklin County that are interested should consult

<https://www.chapa.org/about/programs/municipal-engagement-initiative> and get in touch with Monica.

Monica shared a link to the May 23 session of “Confronting the History of Housing Discrimination” which they are co-hosting as a webinar with JALSA.

## **Updates from around Franklin County and Massachusetts**

- New Housing Secretary appointed for MA – Ed Augustus
- Megan Rhodes - FRCOG Regional Housing Production Plan project is holding a stakeholders' meeting 6/8. This is invitation-only, all Franklin County towns have been invited, please encourage your municipality to send someone!
- Kathy Orlando (Sheffield) asked if anyone had resources for her about sewage treatment options for municipalities that do not have a treatment plant.

## **Getting Together in person: July 20 STHWG meeting**

Our summer meeting will be in person, in Turners Falls, starting with a field trip to housing sites, and ending at The Rendezvous restaurant. More details to come!