

WHITEFISH STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 13, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

1. Call to order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Ben Davis

Present: Lori Collins (via phone), Wendy Compton-Ring, Ben Davis, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Kevin Gartland (via phone), Bob Horne, John Muhlfeld, Rebecca Norton, Dana Smith

Absent: none

Others: Three (3) people from the public were in attendance (Addie Testa-Brown, Ed Docter, Toby Scott)

2. Communications from the Public:

Rhonda Fitzgerald – disappointed with the final result of the ADU draft recommended to the Planning Board from the HSC.

Ben – this has moved onto the Planning Board and City Council and that would be the place to voice concerns.

Rhonda – doesn't think it reflects what the Committee wanted

3. Approval of Minutes from the December 2, 2021 meetings:

Davis/Muhlfeld moved to approve the December 2, 2021, meeting minutes. Passed unanimously as amended.

4. Presentation by Laura Seyfang, Executive Director, Big Sky Community Housing Trust

Described the housing challenges in Big Sky and the Rent Local program and the Home Share Program. Rent Local: free service to owner – screen local renters and they have a website to show available rentals. There is an ala carte option for other services that they charge for including property management options. Recently started paying to help incentivize property owners to join the program – incentives are based on the length of the lease and size of the unit depends; a portion is paid at the beginning and remainder at the end. They do not target the luxury units, but the places people would like to live such as the town center and meadow area.

Home Share: This program is for property owner with their unit in the Rent Local program and is for the owner that wants to just visit for a few weeks a year and it allows them to stay at a high-end unit (ski-in/ski-out) for a \$500/week cleaning fee.

How to address/include property owners that have been renting to locals all along. They raised money to do a 'renewal' or 'thank you' in order to keep people doing the right thing. Can't afford to lose more housing stock and the drawing is to give the money out to the current long-term rent property owners.

Another program looking at, similar to the Vail Indeed program, a get permanent deed restriction; % of the value of the property and, if rented, to a long-term person

Working with the Big Sky HOAs (50 in the Big Sky area and function like a governing body), provide assistance to limit future STRs

Big Sky obtained a LIHTC grant. But it is a challenge because the business need to pay people a high hourly rate and LIHTC can be much lower income, but workers still can't find housing.

Rhonda – how ensure housing goes to local workers? They will have a compliance program
Ben – Where is funding coming from for all these programs/incentives? Resort Tax, Community Foundations money (more over time with big success), private donations. No budget – challenging within the state of MT with the rules; *Why not a traditional property management versus what they are doing?* Tried to go to the local property managers and they weren't keen on the low fees so they took this on themselves.

Rebecca – Do you discuss with property owners the proper rents for the workers? No, try to influence with a recommended cap. If someone wants to charge more, they don't get the incentive. They have had success talking people into reasonable rent rate and they are hoping with added supply the prices will come down. *Population still about 3,000 people?* Yes. *How many property managers?* 12. 95% of them focus exclusively on STRs. *Goal in terms of occupancy ratio of locals versus 2nd homeowners?* No, their goal is the addition of units

Rhonda – LIHTC; how ensure housing goes to local workforce? They need to comply with the Fair Housing Law, strong preference for local workers, but cannot discriminate; not built yet so may learn more once its built

Dana – 1st year of implementation – total costs? Will get back with the exact figure. *How determine the average STR nightly rate?* AIRDNA

Ben – Thanked Laura for the good information and presentation.

Bob – Which Colorado communities reviewed to develop the program? Vail and the CO Ski Town Group – get together and publish some good information. *Anything beyond just sharing information – legislative lobbying?* Not too sure. Trust Montana and other organizations are working toward trying to solve this problem too.

Ben – Asked the Committee if we all more or less interested in this topic now after hearing from Big Sky?

Rhonda – Big Sky has a number of community foundations to help with funding; resort tax is quite different too: nonprofits and other organizations lobby for money annually; % goes to nonprofits; 1% goes toward housing

Bob – probably more organized with capital improvement projects with this model; might be a good incentive for the ADUs; there are national foundations too

John – Is this a good use of time/money? Will this move the needle adequately?

Bob – believes there are volunteers out there could help

Dana – is the City the right entity or should it be another organization? WHA?

Rhonda and Bob – there is a lot of enthusiasm for workforce housing

Addie – we are significantly different than Big Sky; they are struggling to get people interested in serving on the Whitefish Housing Board; worried about funding and the number of people we'll need to 'get this going'; in Big Sky not a lot of 2nd homes that are used but people with 2nd homes do want to use them

Rhonda – good idea in the short-term

Ben – this is one of the options we can do immediately; doesn't feel like it is a City program; maybe the City could donate money to help it get started; City shouldn't be the lead

Vail Indeed Program – like a conservation easement for housing

Ben – would like to see a structure of program to review

Rebecca – workforce housing for this coming summer is important now

Kevin – worth pursuing as it is something we need now

Addie – noted the number of people that will be out of housing very soon such as those at Outlaw Inn with 30-day notice

Landing Locals will come to the next meeting – more from a vendor perspective

Toby – working on housing stuff for the past 6 months; Housing Local Plan is a feasible way to go; they are working on a website; seems like the Housing Local could be able to do this with 2 staff people; need to get something going soon – before March; 6 houses with 2-3 bedrooms to house 20-30 employees; development takes a long time; volunteerism may be important to get the program going and to support the Strategic Housing Plan Steering Committee

Rhonda – how many employees needed for the summer? 100s

Toby – the Whitefish Workforce group continues to meet weekly at the Pin and Cue 11AM on Tuesdays

How can we encourage employees to spur some housing?

NEXT STEPS:

Bring something back to the Committee next month to review

5. Update on Affordable Housing Strategies in Progress:

a. Whitefish Housing Authority – project updates

1. SNOW lot – Things are moving along; they recently met with the construction manager and are looking at utilities; the architect working and anticipate design development in February with the bid-set in March and construction in April. They intend to do planning process during this same time. They looked at obtaining an easement from BNSF but learned there are plumes on the property which would add complication
Wendy – concerned they are under-estimating the permitting timeline; Lori and Wendy will discuss permitting
2. Land Banking – the WHA is putting out feelers to see about obtaining land
3. Alpenglow 2 – starting the capital campaign and does not anticipate the 19 unit will apply for LIHTC; LIHTC up to 60% AMI and cannot be only for workforce; LIHTC will be different as we move forward because employers are now paying more.
Rhonda – when can people take application for the Snow Lot? It will be good to make it widely known when applications are being taken and updates on the process
4. Community Land Trust – we have a 501(c)(3)

NEXT STEPS:

None for the HSC

b. Chamber of Commerce – 1% Voluntary Assessment

A draft business/implementation plan for the Voluntary Housing Assessment has been put together; it is going to require participation from everyone from all sectors of the business community; going to meet with Chamber Board on 19th to review the draft plan and determine who's responsible for what? The plan's implementation? And coordinate with the WHA

NEXT STEPS:

None for HSC

c. City of Whitefish

ADUs will be going to the Planning Board in January as a work session

Dana – met with the WHA, WF Community Foundation to look at housing out at the sewer treatment plant

Rebecca - How much the property will be appraised? 8.8 acres – a lot of work needs to be done to get it ready for development

Dana – learned that ARPA funds can be used for affordable housing on vacant land – there are new guidelines

Staff shared the real estate sales for the 59937 in 2021 with the NMAR updated information; the average house was \$1,142,229 and the median was \$800,000

NEXT STEPS:

None for the HSC

- 6. Next Committee Meeting:** February 10, 2022
- 7. Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.