

WHITEFISH STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 10, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

1. Call to order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Ben Davis

Present: Lori Collins, Wendy Compton-Ring, Ben Davis, Rhonda Fitzgerald, Bob Horne, Rebecca Norton, Dana Smith

Absent: Kevin Gartland, John Muhlfeld

Staff: Tara Osendorf, Long-Range Planner

Others: Four (4) people from the public were in attendance (Dave Means, Superintendent of WF Schools, Mallory Phillips, Ed Docter, Nathan Dugan)

2. Communications from the Public:

Nathan Dugan – He and Mallory are in the process of forming an organization to increase housing and promote affordable housing in our community. They are looking at the Shelter JH nonprofit in Jackson, WY as a model. He noted the state is going to come in and change the rules and he’s concerned it would not build in protections for affordable housing. If Whitefish keeps denying projects with affordable housing, we are making their argument for them. The new NIMBY-ism is development projects are not providing ‘ENOUGH’ affordable housing.

Ed Docter – His group is trying to do employee housing – it is hard and complicated; we need to be prepared to be one of the most expensive places to live in the country and it is only going to get worse. Their group is working on voluntary programs to convert STR to long-term rentals. They need to work within the existing nonprofit to get it going and funding is going to be the big thing. In Crested Butte, CO, no more advertising and their Visitor Bureau is putting \$300k to housing. Thinks the Winter Park, CO program would be the way to go.

Dave Means, Superintendent of WF Schools – would like to be a part of the partnerships for housing in our community. They and the Kalispell School District have a number of openings and lack of housing will make it challenging to fill positions.

3. Approval of Minutes from the February 10, 2022 meetings:

Norton/Collins moved to approve the February 10, 2022, meeting minutes along with Kevin Gartland's update. Passed unanimously.

4. Presentation by Wendy Sullivan, WSW Consulting, Review of 2017 Strategic Housing Strategies

Wendy Sullivan, WSW Consulting, provided the Committee with a copy of a memo dated 3-10-22 to review Strategies in the 2017 Plan regarding what should be the next strategies for Committee focus. The HSC work and next strategies would pair well with the update to the Housing Needs Assessment.

Wendy reviewed the strategies and their status.

Resort Tax – staff is suggesting waiting until 2027. Reallocation requires a vote of the people, and the money will not be collected until 2025.

Rhonda – The public believes the Resort Tax should be going to housing.

Dana – Need a plan for projects so the public knows how the money will be used. For example, the City has a list of 30 street projects. We will need to have a priority of projects to tell the story of housing.

Concerns – there should be concerns about denial of projects by the City Council; denial causes concern on behalf of developers to pursue housing, it hurts the ability to raise money for other housing project, reduces community support for affordable housing. It is important to move the needle to support housing projects. Are we getting the right information to the public regarding the need for affordable housing?

Rebecca – Concerned with design; is there a better way to address housing? Infill or the approach to housing?

Rhonda – believes the community is supportive of housing, but not housing that is incompatible with the neighborhood; what can be developed that is compatible?

Wendy Sullivan reviewed her memo:

1) **Education.** These are typical comments heard when communities talk about affordable housing and they are a façade to avoid getting lower income-type of housing which is why the education component is REALLY important for affordable housing success. Education is really important as well as getting the right information out. There is not a lot of people in support of affordable housing projects so YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard) organizations can provide the voice for affordable housing and other communities have found this helpful. (ShelterJH)

2) **Employer Housing.** This is near term housing which is important now. It is important to make sure all the resources are needed to make this happen (i.e., Landing Locals

model). STR conversion, as a temporary program for 2-5 years until housing can be built. Other options include old hotel/motel conversions, temporary housing and/or seasonal options.

Rebecca – we have a hotel being converted; 60 rooms

Ben – who typically operates these types of programs? *STR conversions are all over the map – some towns, some nonprofits and some housing authorities in combination with nonprofits (community resource groups). For temporary housing, City involvement is just to make sure it can happen and then it is done by the private employers*

Rebecca – KOA south of town; what about housing outside of town and coordinating transportation? *Wendy – thinks the Aspen model provided transport. Exploring all options is worthwhile.*

Bob – we are going to be in the housing business and in the transport business

Lori – biggest concern about seasonal housing

- 3) **Snow Lot.** Look at underutilized and redevelopment land; constantly be developing a plan for development to share with the public to tell the story of housing and obtain funding
- 4) **Capacity and resources.** Wendy reviewed all the different jobs needed to staff up for housing including: Housing Whitefish staff, a grant writer, and an executive director.

These are the core components: an effective education campaign to counteract the NIMBY and keep an eye on a YIMBY group for project support.

#1 GET CORE COMPONENTS IN PLACE + EDUCATION CAMPAIGN IN PLACE

#2 EMPLOYER ASSISTED HOUSING

#3 FINANCING. WF Community Foundation, Chamber of Commerce – voluntary assessment, mills, resort taxing

Financing + Capacity = success!

Start to identify next tier housing projects, as this helps with financing

Updating the Zoning Code to support additional housing

Rebecca – concerned about immediate need of housing for this summer

Ben – noted the current zoning and growth policy and feels zoning in many parts of town is too restrictive. How can this be updated in a short or medium term to solve this problem? *Discussed the voluntary aspects of the zoning in order to get affordable housing*

and the challenges with getting items approved. Those density bonuses are 'by-right' so a project cannot be denied based on density. What does the City think are the issues impeding development? PUD is one of the only tools to get the affordable housing; 'by right' density bonus versus rezoning. Wendy Sullivan will forward good examples. Developers need the density bonus and the market rate units to make a project pencil. It's important to find the balance. If the density bonus is too small it won't be used and the community needs to decide who is going to pay for affordable housing, the developer or the public?

Bob – McCall, Is using density bonus but they also have sewer district challenges. *McCall will pay a developer, but no one is using it because it's not enough; Frisco, CO – they have a ton of units with 50% density bonus. Is the Whitefish base density too high?*

Under Core Components – lots of people and moving parts; time to consider an evolution of the Housing Committee with the other housing partnerships and it is an opportunity to develop new partnerships; provided an example of a partnership of people

Employer Assisted Housing – Chamber's role to bring businesses together; help prioritize projects and other short-term type projects

Rhonda – how to get the snow lot going? *Know it's important to have a successful project.*
Ben – only Tier One strategy we haven't worked on is the annexation strategy; thoughts on the annexation policy? *WF does have larger parcels outside of the city limits; good idea to get it done ahead of time*

Asked about the City Council work session. Growth policy update and zoning.

NEXT STEPS:

The Committee will review and digest her memo

Bob – described how the WF PUD process is flawed and suggested the Colorado Springs model (preliminary process with the entitlement upfront and then come back to the City to show the details); would like to write something and share with the Committee

The Committee described the various priorities

Bob – we should look at the process to make it better for the neighborhoods and our town

Ben – there are a lot of opportunities to build housing that would be palatable to the public

Bob – agrees

Intersection between what is acceptable and approvable

Dana – everyone read the memo and bring it back to the next meeting

5. Update on Affordable Housing Strategies in Progress:

a. Whitefish Housing Authority – project updates

Handed out a memo with an update on the Snow Lot

NEXT STEPS:

Nothing from the Committee

b. Chamber of Commerce

Handed out a memo from Kevin. The Chamber will be hosting a Housing Forum at Grouse Mtn on April 13th. More information to come.

NEXT STEPS:

Nothing from the Committee

c. City of Whitefish

Didn't have time to go over City items.

6. Next Committee Meeting: April 14, 2022

7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

WHA PROJECTS REPORT

ALPENGLLOW APARTMENTS - COMPLETED

In 2021 the 36-unit Low Income Housing apartment complex on Edgewood was completed and fully Leased up. The WHA partnered with Homeword to win a Low-Income Housing Tax Fund grant through the Sate of MT. There were only 4 of 22 applications awarded for that year. Of the 36 units the majority are working households with 7 having a head of household over the age of 62 and 7 households with school age children. The current waitlist for this project is over 100.

SNOW LOT - ONGOING

In June of 2020 the WHA was given the property known as the Snow Lot by the City of Whitefish. WHA has since entered into a contract with an Owners Rep / Construction Mgr., David Saenz of Montana Construction Co as well as an Architect / Engineer, Jenn Clary of Encompass Designs.

- To date we have secured full funding through TIF, PILH Funding and ARPA Funds through the City of Whitefish for a Draft / Proposed Budget of \$8.7 million. Home sale prices will be set for households making between 80 – 120% of AMI and at current construction estimates we anticipate home prices to stay below \$300,000. This will depend on construction costs as we move towards our construction bid package.
- We attended our 1st Site Review meeting with City Staff on January 27th.
- We currently anticipate building 22 2-bed / 2-bath townhomes with 20 being 2-story and 2 being single story units. The single-story units will have optional packages to make the units ADA compliant at the purchaser's expense. The reduction in units is mainly due to open space requirements and fire turn around restrictions. We are allowed a reduction in parking, but we prefer not to if possible. We hope to have 2 parking spots per unit and placed in front of the individual units.
- We have completed site work with Flathead Electric to determine where the power will come onto the site and are looking to order the transformer to potentially have power installed on the property

summer of 2022. This is a “long lead” item for purchase, and we believe it is best to order sooner as it is potentially a year out to receive. We also feel that we could sell the unit if WHA did/could not move forward with the project. The cost will be reduced from the construction bid package.

- There is a 2nd site review meeting scheduled for March 31st.
- We have a full presentation with 3D site plan at City Council scheduled for April 18th. Encompass will be joining/facilitating remotely.
- We have put waitlist access and information on our website.

Our current schedule is as follows:

- 2nd Site Plan meeting on March 31st. At this time the Architect and Engineer will have all proposed drawings complete and will be asking for input on our site and design plans.
- Full presentation to City Council with 3d drawings, etc. on April 18th.
- The Subdivision and PUD applications will be submitted in May of 2022.
- Planning Board, City Council 1st and 2nd Readings and the 30-day waiting period will conclude in October 2022.
- Two Construction Bid Packages (Infrastructure & Construction) will then be sent out.
- Infrastructure build to begin in March of 2023 depending on weather and water levels.
- Final Plat application and Architecture Review will then commence with Building Permits in June of 2023.
- We are assuming a 16-month construction build which would put us into fall of 2024 to sell homes.

TRAILVIEW HOMES- ONGOING

- Jerry Dunker is the owner and developer of this 58 single family home project. He has asked and been granted permission from the City of Whitefish to remove 10 of the homes from the current Deed

Restriction requirements within the project and to sell them at market rate.

- WHA will investigate finding funds to pay down the costs of these 10 market rate homes to an affordable level and keep them in our Deed Restricted Program.
- A meeting was held with the WF Community Foundation to discuss and gauge the interest of donors for funding the gap. More information is needed and an exploratory committee will need to be formed to move forward on this.

LAND BANKING – THESE INDIVIDUAL PROJECT WILL EXPAND AS NEEDED

- ALP II - The WHA owns a piece of land adjacent to the Alpenglow Apartments that will be used to create additional rental housing. WHA has determined that it could create up to 19 additional units of affordable housing for our community. We are looking at funding this project through a private, public partnership.
- Moneghan Road - WHA is in talks with The City to potentially develop City owned land on Moneghan Road with potentially 100 units of affordable housing. Some funding has been secured through the Whitefish Community Foundation to begin the exploratory phase of how this project could work. We have also heard that some of these funds may be used to hire an Executive Director for HW.
- WHA board members continue to reach out to other landowners in our community to potentially partner with or purchase land suitable for creating affordable housing.

HOUSING WHITEFISH - ONGOING

The current 501c3 non-profit arm of the WHA is WALT dba Housing Whitefish which is in good standing and able to accept tax deductible donations.

- We completed the work with our Attorney, Jason Harby, to completely revamp our non-profit with a full and complete name change to Housing Whitefish and a stand-alone board of no less than 7 with its own Executive Director.
- We completed and adopted the By-Laws.

- We are in possession of the Amended Articles of Incorporation and will adopt at the March meeting.
- We are in possession of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy and will be adopting at the March meeting.
- We contracted with FVCC to create our Branding Guide complete with Logo, Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Core Values.
- 3 members of the WHA board were seated to the newly formed HW board; they are Addie Brown-Testa, Katie Williams, and Kate Berry.
- 10 Letters of Interest were received from members of the public.
- 9 Interviews for the remaining seats were conducted the 1st week of March. Offers were made to 6 applicants; 3 to date have accepted. They are Jerry Dunker, Steven Walters and Hillary Shaw. We are still waiting to hear from Clare Gobel, Nikki Lentz and Kristin Zuckerman.
- The 1st board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 23rd following the WHA board meeting.
- HW received a grant of \$75,000 from Explore Whitefish to hire a Grant Writer to help HW find and secure long-term funding for affordable housing projects in Whitefish and potentially much needed staff.
- We have heard that some of WCF funds received from a donor may be used to hire an Executive Director.
- I submitted a proposed draft MOU between Explore Whitefish and HW with a scope work and other requirements. We will work together to get this completed and signed in the very near future.
- The MOU has been forwarded to the City Attorney for review.



Chamber of Commerce

To: Whitefish Strategic Housing Plan Steering Committee
From: Kevin Gartland
Date: March 10, 2022
Re: Chamber updates

My apologies for being unable to attend again this evening. My continuing education course wraps-up next week, so I'll be back in the swing of things in April.

Updates for this month:

- We have begun meeting with local business owners re: establishment of the Whitefish Workforce Housing Fund (previously referred to as the "Voluntary Assessment"), a business-based funding stream to assist in the development of future workforce housing developments, programs and projects. That outreach is continuing.
- In conjunction with the Whitefish Housing Project, the Chamber hosted a meeting of local business owners on February 18 to gauge interest in a "Rent Local" program similar to those in use in Big Sky, Winter Park, Truckee and other resort communities. Employers present indicated that they felt the program is worth pursuing, if funding can be secured to cover the "incentive payments" to property owners to remove their homes from the short term rental pool.
- The Chamber will be hosting its "2022 Workforce Housing Summit" on Wednesday, April 13 at the Grouse Mountain Lodge, from appx 8-11 a.m. (exact details still being finalized). Our goals for the summit:
 - To refocus the public's attention on our community's workforce housing efforts;
 - To report to the business community on what's been accomplished since the city's Strategic Housing Plan was approved in 2017;
 - To introduce/establish Housing Whitefish as the proper entity to lead the effort moving forward; and
 - To identify how and where we're going to get the funding needed to have a significant impact on the situation.

I am working with Dana, Ben, Katie and Lori to put together the program, which will include:

- A recap of our efforts to date;
- A review of programs/projects that are currently in progress (i.e. Snow Lot, possibly Monegan);
- The results of an Employer Survey to be conducted by the Chamber this month;
- A panel discussion with local employers who are currently providing housing assistance to their workers;
- A look at what needs to be done moving forward
- A "keynote" speaker to address how other communities are attacking the problem, how much they're spending, where the funding is coming from, etc.
- A discussion with attendees re: the business-driven Whitefish Workforce Housing Fund currently in development

More to come as the event gets closer. It will be a ticketed (breakfast) event in the Continental Divide Room at the Grouse. We are shooting to keep the price in the \$10-15 range; and I'm looking for a sponsor or two to help underwrite expenses and keep the cost down.

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