

WHITEFISH STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 14, 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, Kevin Gartland, Bob Horne, John Muhlfeld, Rebecca Norton, John Muhlfeld, Dana Smith

Absent: none

Staff: Riss Getts, via MS Teams

Others: Three (3) people from the public were in attendance (Giuseppe Caltabiano, City Council; Dave Means, WF School District; Addie Brown-Testa, WHA)

2. Communications from the Public:

Giuseppe – went to the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce Housing event and was pleased to see the support for affordable housing. He would like to reconsider the bring back the reallocation of the sales tax and it is in the scope of this group. He wondered if we do not have to do the rebate portion of the sale tax.

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

Collins/Muhlfeld moved to approve the March 10, 2022, meeting minutes, as amended, along with Kevin Gartland and Lori Collins’s updates. Passed unanimously.

4. Introductions. Dana introduced Riss Getts, via Teams, hired as the new Housing Coordinator/Long-Range Planner. Riss introduced herself and provided the Committee a bit of her background.

Rebecca – asked about her thesis and she said it is about Whitefish

Lori – asked about the Snow Lot design project associated with one of her classes

Ben – excited to have her onboard

5. Review and discuss memo by Wendy Sullivan, WSW Consulting, prioritizing remaining strategies in the 2017 Strategic Housing Strategies

Rhonda – concerned that the affordable housing problem isn't a NIMBY problem; seems like developer use the affordable housing to 'take advantage' of the community; shouldn't frame our priorities around this term

Lori – of the projects that have come forward, she have observed the public is not pleased with anything and then we get nothing

Sketch Plan Regulations.

Bob – would like to see another process to reduce the 'risk' involved in the developed plan; can this be presented as a preliminary design?

Dana – concerned the public and Council wouldn't be pleased to see preliminary designs

John – Wondered where this is successfully being used

Bob – Colorado Springs when he was there and believes Missoula uses some form of it; it would qualify one to get some sort of entitlement – type, height and design

John – noted the quasi-judicial concerns with this type of process

Ben – wanted to know if Bob's written this down

Rhonda – thinks this is a good way to start meeting with the community before the developer spends a lot of money and the public thinks the project is a done deal

Bob – thinks it would be part of the PUD process

John – only use for PUD with density bonus

Ben – might be an interesting item under 'Zoning for Affordability'

FROM WSW Consulting MEMO:

1. Core Components

Staff: obtaining housing dedicated staff is 'in process' to help an increase in capacity

Partnership Framework – identify people that can bring something to the table in a newly reformed Housing Committee that would be an evolution of the current Strategic Housing Plan Committee

Public awareness/education – Brian Schott, PR with the CVB; can we use the CVB to do this?

Political support – YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard); Considering a lobbyist to support Whitefish

Bob – wonders about the success of a lobbyist just for our small town

Rhonda – the lobbyist-model for the tourism groups let the members know when something important is happening, then they let their group members know and everyone calls the legislators which seems to be the most effective vs just lobbyist communication

2. Employer-Assisted Housing & Near-Term Housing Options

STR Conversion. We are working on this and will report to the group next month

Co-op Model. The Chamber is meeting and can report to the group next month;
Bob – concerned with kicking out one group of employees to house someone else's employees
Kevin – good point and we'll discuss this topic further

Employer Assisted Housing.

Deed Restriction Program. This is the Vail Indeed program and is very expensive. Need a funding source.

3. Financing

Ben – Need a permanent funding source. Appreciated the math Kevin did at the Chamber Housing breakfast as it puts it into perspective

Resort Tax

Rhonda – thinks the voters would support reallocation

John – does the original allocation stay in place if a vote of the public fails? Dana – Yes, the original allocation would remain

Dana – Bozeman did not pass a recently proposed levy for housing; if we chose to go to the voters we will have to make sure to provide good education/public relations and a plan for where this money will go. It needs to be very logical

John – would hope a reallocation vote wouldn't be very controversial

Ben – asked Dana to remind the group why reallocation would not happen until Feb 2025?

We need to pay off the Haskill Basin Conservation Basin

Rebecca – thinks the public wants to see Resort Tax used for housing so it seems like a good thing to look at

Kevin – the iron's hot we should be looking at this now

Ben – what can we do now?

MOTION:

Rhonda – touch base with the Resort Tax Committee on reallocation

Kevin – 2nd

DISCUSSION:

Dana – would be a good idea to involve the Resort Tax Committee possibly at the May meeting

Ben Davis, Kevin Gartland and Dana agreed to attend the May meeting

VOTE:

Unanimous vote

Unused Mill Levy

Dana – we have some mills available that do not require a vote of the people; last year there was some agreement from the Council to consider using this money for housing and it could be part of the ADU fee reimbursement program on a 1st come 1st serve basis. Dana can bring more information back to the Committee.

Ben – important to start to accumulate money in a fund and the Council needs to determine how the money is used. This should be an annual process. How do we move this forward?

Dana – It will be part of the City Manager budget

Dana will send out information to the Committee.

Foundations. The Mtn Gateway was a catalyst to get donors involved in housing.

Bob – noted there are national foundations too

NEXT STEPS:

Bob & Riss will bring something back to the next meeting – May

Dana will bring the requested financial information to the group

The group will finish up items 4-6 in the WSW Consulting memo at the May meeting

6. Update on Affordable Housing Strategies in Progress:

a. Whitefish Housing Authority – updates

Lori provided an update of the SNOW lot to the group. Lori met with Bruce Boody to look at Alpenglow, Phase II; it will need to be a public-private partnership for funding, and they will need at least 15 units to make it work.

Whitefish Housing continues to move forward. They recently signed an MOU with the Whitefish CVB for the money to hire a grant writer, they signed a memo of engagement with the Community Foundation and have assigned smaller groups to tackle different issues including putting together the job description of the Executive Director.

NEXT STEPS:

Nothing from the Committee

b. Chamber of Commerce – update

Asked if the Committee had thoughts on the Summit. Everyone thought it went well and helped to develop unity around the affordable housing. Everyone agrees we need money and professional expertise and he's encouraged by the WF Housing nonprofit

We need a Strategic Housing Plan with projects yesterday in order to start the fund raising – Chamber and WF Community Foundation
Rhonda – thanks; good information for the group

NEXT STEPS:

The group wondered if this can this happen every year to give the public an update?

c. City of Whitefish

Dana – briefly went over the new scope of work for the Needs Assessment/Strategic Housing Plan update

Short-term Rental Conversion Program – will be meeting next week

7. Next Committee Meeting: May 12, 2022

Bob – appreciates the meeting and the group has accomplished something

Rhonda – suggests a development passing lane if the project is providing affordable housing

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.