

# WHITEFISH STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

May 13, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

**1. Call to order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Kevin Gartland

Others: Angie Jacobs

Ben welcomed Lori Collins to the Housing Steering Committee as a new member.

**2. Public Comments:** none

**3. Approval of Minutes from the March 11, 2021 meetings:**

Fitzgerald/Muhlfeld moved to approve the March 11, 2021 meeting minutes. Passed unanimously.

**4. Update from Whitefish Housing Authority:**

Snow Lot – The WHA has secured a construction manager for the Snow Lot and they are working on pre-development. They included quite a bit of bunch of covid language into agreements/contracts that they could wait until prices go down. RFP in the next month for architectural and their accountant tracking ready to accept funds from the City for the Snow Lot project

Rhonda – thinks plans for the Columbia r.o.w. and building locations should think about if it is big enough to accommodate an overpass to Texas Ave

Alpenglow Apartments – planning on Building #3 obtaining their C of O next week; leasing is going great. There is a very long wait list.

Rebecca – did if anyone from some of the affordable apartment projects applied to be in these apartments? Lori said no one was low income enough to qualify for Alpenglow and they already had a wait list

Rebecca – receiving calls from people in desperate situations

Rhonda – are the people filling it up the workforce

Lori – this is different than the Legacy Homes program, as it is filling a need for the very low-income people including disabled renters

Rhonda – a ‘ribbon cutting’? Lori – yes, probably this summer

Bob – asked about the state tax credit bill? Dana – this creates a state tax credit

**NEXT STEPS:**

None for the Steering Committee

**5. Update from City of Whitefish:**

Legacy Homes Program Update/Process

HB 259 was signed into law in April. Sent letters to the applicants with the 2 projects letting them know the IZ requirements still apply. Moving forward, will not be applying IZ. Staff will be working at the June 7<sup>th</sup> City Council worksession to get direction on moving forward. We will provide information on what the law says, what it means for our program moving forward, discuss what a volunteer program might be like and other ideas.

Ben – recommended everyone on the Committee attend; at the worksession, Ben would like to discuss our strategic housing plan, the next steps and review the priorities

Bob – asked Angie about the petition to annex, as he understood cities have unbridled discretion in accepting annexed property and can require nearly anything; HB using the term ‘addition’ looks broad which appears to include annexations and falls under the provisions of the bill

The Committee discussed annexation and suitable areas for affordable housing

Ben – now is the time to review the strategic housing plan and reconsider strategies that we’d maybe didn’t consider previously

Rhonda – change the Legacy Homes program from price for ownership/rental to local worker/resident instead; price will be lower due to the lower local wages; something we need to review carefully; best thing is to get housing for a local worker and the 2<sup>nd</sup> best would be housing for primary residents; thinks the Plan is outdated being 4 years old – things have changed exponentially

Bob – wonders if the linkage requirement could be crafted to comply with the HB – the differences between requirements and incentive; could we require employee housing versus based on income

Rhonda – thinks a residential linkage would be better than commercial

John – the business community came to us and they should have some skin in the game

Other Items:

AMI went down for Flathead County for 2021 and we got lumped into the ‘all other’ for state of MT; this comes from HUD; income went down and house pricing went up increasing the gap

Rebecca – suggested the use of tax abatement to preserve existing homes; use sales tax  
Dana described the opportunities and challenges with these two methods

Rebecca – suggested we work with the business community to develop an affordable housing project. Public-Private Partnership

Bob – suggested businesses do this in Jackson, WY and develop an affordable housing co-op; another way to solve the problem

Rebecca – talked to a project manager in the Railway District about housing; he suggested alternative housing types and a site for housing; he worked on the student housing at MSU and thinks this could be a viable option for worker housing in WF

#### **6. Accessory Dwelling Unit Draft Language Revisions:**

Staff reviewed the memo on research the Committee requested on what other communities are doing to encourage ADUs and ensure they are for local residents/workers. In addition, the light design standards were reviewed by the Arch Review Committee and they offered some suggestions the Steering Committee reviewed.

Ben – the renting out of both the single-family home and the ADU is likely the biggest carrot we can offer and it could be a trade-off worth considering in exchange for long-term rental

John – not convinced this is a good idea

Rebecca – continues to be concerned with impact on the neighborhood

Bob – what kind of mills do we levy? Is there enough to encourage tax abatements?

Dana – only certain tax abatements; Council could use mills for affordable housing in exchange for a long-term rental

Ben – doesn't this that is the best use of those mills

Rhonda – continues to be concerned with absentee owners; she reminded the Committee that the ADU was passed on the premise that there would be an on-site owner monitoring their tenant; believes ADUs change the character of the neighborhood, not in support

Rebecca – should keep everything on the table – could be suitable somewhere

Dana – there is no difference between and ADU or a duplex

Angie – renters can be fine and will contribute to the neighborhood

Dana – we could have follow-up information

Rhonda – make sure the ADU serves the intended purpose

Staff would like to survey ADU owners to see what they are using them for, are they being rented – if so, who are they renting too; if they are not renting, why and what sort of incentives would cause them to rent to a long-term renter

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

Staff will put together a survey, draft language with ARC and draft ADU regulations with enough incentives to get a long-term lease

Ben – incentives may be politically unpalatable at this time

Bob – we need to grow the carrot

**7. Next Committee Meeting:** June 10, 2021 in person

**8. Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.