

Planning & Sustainability • City of Northampton

resilience | regeneration | design | conservation | placemaking | mobility | accessibility | community development | historic | zoning | GIS | agriculture

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Housing Partnership 5:30 PM, Monday, Feb. 1, 2021

Zoom Meeting

Members

Rev. Todd Weir, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edgardo Cancel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ace Tayloe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gordon Shaw, Vice Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carmen Junno	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sara Howard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Richard Abuza	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hannah Shaffer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Julio Alves	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jim Reis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Staff: Keith Benoit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. Introductions and public comment. No public comments. Ace Tayloe mentioned that there was a fire at a homeless encampment the other day, where some people lost the house they were living in. Ace Tayloe wanted the NHP to think about them when we make decisions today.
2. The Partnership approved unanimously upon motion by Richard Abuza and second by Jim Reis the Jan. 4th 2021 Minutes.
3. Keith Benoit gave an update on the PV Habitat homes on Burts Pit Rd. Richard Abuza liked that they were smaller units. Jim Reis wanted representative from PV Habitat to the meetings in the future, as is normally custom. There are some questions that he has some questions.
4. Writing a letter of support to the CPC for PV Habitat Broughton's Meadow project moved by Jim Reis, seconded by Richard Abuza - passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
5. Jim Reis gave an update on the Landlord seminar communication with the Mayor. Keith Benoit agreed to follow up with the Mayor, to discuss Landlord Seminar.
6. Jim Reis started discussion on the Housing Navigator job description and subcommittee report. Do you agree with what we reported on? Todd Weir welcomed the new guests and caught them up on what we are discussing e.g., details on the housing report and recommendations from it. Ace Tayloe asked what consideration was given regarding the workload of this job description. Carmen Julio reminded us that the affordable housing in Northampton is very fragmented,



and that it takes a navigator, someone who knows housing and can help people find housing. Gordon Shaw said that there is a no central place for housing and getting people for the move vulnerable. Having it at the resiliency hub would target homeless, but that it could be more targeted to other groups too. Todd Weir said that the person would have to have knowledge in other areas as well, but that whoever ends up running the resiliency hub would end up changing the job description somewhat. Sara Howard was also concerned that the caseload that housing navigator took on, could be voluntary/as needed. A member of the public asked for an update on the resiliency hub. Keith Benoit gave an update on a possible when and where it could close and Todd Weir gave more details on the programming - fundraising opportunities/partners for the hub. Jim Reis said he would like to see our recommendations to the City/Community Action as soon as possible. Martin Wohl asked for an update on what the planning process was for the resiliency hub.

7. Ace Tayloe asked to remove #6: Carry case load. Open to rephrase to make it not mandatory or make it a very small caseload. Carmen Junno asked for clarification that we are only making a recommendation for the housing navigator. Gordon Shaw just acknowledged that we are only making recommendation but staffing/ money would need to come from somewhere. Money is tight right now.
8. Richard Abuza motion to recognize the barriers to housing is complex and that it needs a dedicated Housing Navigator as amended and sent to the persons planning the resiliency hub, seconded by Jim Reis. It was passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
9. Meeting with the Mayor discussion for next month. Todd Weir said that the City solicitor had looked at it and it would not fit into their City charter or have legal standing. This limits what the NHP was proposing. Carmen Junno gave an update to public attendees on the cost of getting into rental housing is very high. Ace Tayloe said that NYC and Boston do not have brokers fees charged to tenants, but they are very hot housing markets. Gordon Shaw would like to know what argument that the City solicitor used to say banning rental fees was not for Northampton. Hannah Shaffer also said she would like to hear the solicitor's argument. She also wondered if the consumer protection is the route to go, what does rental agencies do to vet the landlords? Todd Weir reminded us that we recommended the fair housing report and we are following up with the report. He said we should prepare ahead of the meeting, do we want the solicitor to join us? Ace Tayloe had said that they asked landlords about the service and RentNOHO does a lot of hard lifting for the landlord. Makes it easy. Sarah Howard asked if it makes sense to reach out to someone at the state level for resources, Richard Abuza wanted reasoning in advance of meeting from City solicitor. Jim Reis said the Mayor should get all the information ahead of time so we can have good discussion.
10. Reiterated that we are just following up on recommendations from the Fair Housing

report. Ace Tayloe summarized the recommendations that the subcommittee had made. Todd Weir had said that creating the matchmaking service should be kept in the NHP back pocket so that if the other recommendations fails we still have that.

11. Keith Benoit gave updates on zoning and affordability ordinances advancing, the Housing Choice grant, and the City taking ownership of the two parcels at the State Hospital. Jim Reis asked if we could get updated regarding Way Finders support services. The Youth Commission asked if there is anything that they could do to help the City make affordable housing more a thing. Carmen Junno thought it was great that high schoolers are getting involved. Jim Reis said that contacting PV Habitat directly would be beneficial. Todd Weir said that sitting on a board or fundraising are two ways to get involved.
12. The Housing Partnership adjourned unanimously at 7:01 from a motion by Richard Abuza and seconded by Jim Reis.