

Committee Meeting Minutes

Montpelier Housing Committee

March 3, 2026

6:00-7:40 p.m.

Montpelier Senior Center and Zoom

Alyssa Schuren, Chairperson

Tim Heney, Minute Taker

Attendance

Committee Members Present: Alyssa Schuren (Chair), Lauren Hierl (Vice Chair), Alexandra Halasz, Dan Coppock, Ben Linder, Sandra Vitzthum, Tim Heney,

Councilors & City Staff: Cary Brown (District 3 Councilor) (Zoom), Ben Doyle (District 1 Councilor), Jim Sheridan (District 3 Councilor) (Zoom), Matt Jelacic (Montpelier Community and Economic Development Specialist)

Public: Stephen Cohen, Steven Whitaker, Joseph Castalino (Zoom)

Meeting Notes

Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Committee unanimously approved minutes of February 3, 2026 meeting comments made during discussion of Notes includes S. Whitaker requested paper copy of minutes be available at meetings.

Chair mentioned that one hour portion (7:30 – 8:30 p.m.) of the April 7 meeting will be a meeting with developers and this meeting will be extended by one hour to accommodate this.

Public Comment

Steven Whitaker said that staff has reduced the number of low income units required in the Country Club Road project to be 24 units. In doing so, he asserts that City staff bypassed the City planning process, Planning Commission, Housing Committee.

Ben Doyle followed that the 24 units of affordable units is a factually incorrect statement.

Alyssa will follow up to clarify.

City Update

Matt Jelacic provided the City Update that work is focusing on three significant grant applications in process being a Dept. of Transportation grant (CC Road project), Community Development Block Grant (CC Road project), and a third grant being awarded by CDBG for flood mitigation for the waste treatment facility in addition to other grant applications in process.

Vacancy Ordinance Update

Alyssa asked Dan Coppock to update the committee. Dan said the sub committee reviewing the Vacancy Ordinance has not met for about two weeks. They are discussing desired tone for the ordinance. Asked if they will be seeking a second opinion about the proposed ordinance from an attorney, it does not seem they will be pursuing this. Either Alyssa or Lauren will join this group at their next meeting. This topic will be on a future Housing Committee agenda.

Tax Stabilization is on the ballot today. To be noted at next meeting following Town Meeting vote.

City Council Meeting March 25, 2026

Alyssa plans to update the City Council regarding Housing Committee Activity and progress. Committee members are welcome to join in person or via Zoom.

Planning Commission Coordination

Alyssa, Tim and Sandy had a call with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Commission to discuss actions in process for review of Unified Montpelier Zoning Regulations. The Planning commission is engaged in a staff organized chapter-by-chapter review considering modifications to current regulations to improve the review processes currently in place. The Planning Commission focus is not to replace current regulations. Matt indicated that he will follow up with Planning Commission. Tim and sandy are scheduled to present concepts for zoning changes to facilitate creation of housing in Montpelier at the April 7 Housing committee meeting.

Sandy talked about the Let's Build Homes group encouraging a state wide zoning code as a model code for communities.

Ben mentioned the Homes For All initiative.

State Appeals Process

Lauren said that a study is in process looking to generate a recommendation for Legislature to act upon next year. Lauren will monitor.

Housing Trust Fund

Sean and Dan are working on new guidelines for the Montpelier Housing Trust Fund and considering proposing a fourth grant category. This will involve modifying the guidelines. More to come.

Montpelier Housing Needs Assessment

This presentation by Christian Meyer and Lory Banbury of Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission provided an overview of this report which had been emailed to committee members in advance. This report provides housing data and analysis outlining the current state of housing in Montpelier. The report generates seven key findings with comprehensive data to support these. A very interesting and compelling presentation. The CVRPC is finalizing this report and welcomes feedback. Can Coppock asked if there is school system data that might be helpful. Christian indicated that education data was not used in preparation of this study. Sandy Vitzthum indicated it will be helpful to tie to Census data with that AMI chart. Sandy's concern is that it is difficult to sort what people can afford. Joe Castalano had questions about methodology of data collection and was asked to talk directly with Lory and Christian.

There will be another update so it is important to get questions and comments to CVRPC within the next two weeks as they will be presenting a final report to the City Council shortly after.

Thank you to Christian and Lory and all at CVRPC who have worked on this report.

Sprinkler Ordinance

A Policy memorandum was prepared by City Staff and distributed to Housing Committee members in their meeting packets. There is national building code for fire suppression sprinkler systems and Vermont State code which varies from National code. In addition, Montpelier has it's own sprinkler ordinance which is in line with National code and more restrictive than State code. For 3-6 unit residential buildings the State code allows mitigation options for first floor spaces in 3-6 unit buildings where Montpelier's ordinance requires these spaces be sprinklered as well. Questions discussed asked if there are ways to mitigate the City code to help the cost of housing. Sandy Vitzthum suggested that the

City simply accept the State code and not maintain a separate code if it's own. The City had offered an incentive which allowed a credit on the annual property tax bill for properties with sprinkler systems. Jim Sheridan addressed the history of this credit. This credit was removed in the City Budget process for the 2025-2026 budget. Ben Doyle and Cary Brown indicated that the City Council has not yet discussed this. Alyssa went around the table to ask each committee member how they feel about this. As a result of this she will write to the City Council to indicate that a majority of the committee supports simply accepting the State sprinkler policy and that the incentive for property owners to have and maintain approved sprinkler systems should be re-considered.

Country Club Road RFP

Four proposals have been submitted. Sandy Vitzthum and Tim Heney are part of one of these four proposals and are recusing themselves from participating in the Housing Committee conversation regarding evaluation for the four proposals. Alyssa asked if anyone on the committee is interested in compiling committee member feedback and asked if members are ok with one person compiling this information as there may not be another committee meeting prior to the City Council meetings on this topic. Further discussion led to setting a meeting for this topic to be on March 10 from 6-7 p.m. Ben Doyle offered that an input form is available to all on the City website. The deadline for the Council to get feedback is March 16, 2026.

Final Remarks

Steven Whitaker again expressed his concern that the process being led by planning staff is limiting/reducing affordable housing options for the Country Club Road project and that market analysis, environmental assessment and master planning are needed before turning control of the site to a developer on March 22.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.