

Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Name: Montpelier Housing Committee

Date: Tuesday, April 7

Time: 6:00–7:30 p.m. + 7:30-8:30pm Developer Feedback

Location: Montpelier Senior Center & Zoom

Chairperson: Alyssa Schuren

Minute Taker: Dan Wheeler

Attendance

Committee Members Present: Alyssa Schuren (Chair), Lauren Hierl (Vice Chair), Dan Wheeler (Secretary), Dan Coppock, Alexandra Halasz, Tim Heney, Sandy Vitzthum, Ben Linder, Sean Sheehan

Absent: All present

Councilors & City Staff: Ben Doyle (District 1 Councilor), Matt Jelacic (Montpelier Community and Economic Development Specialist)

Meeting Summary

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

Committee unanimously approved previous minutes from both March 3, and March 10.

Public Comment

No public comment

City Update

Matt Jelacic gave a City update and discussed the following matters:

- Country Club Rd meeting discussing proposals
- Tax stabilization will propose to City how to make it work with regs
- Potential revisions to City camping policy.
- Potential renewed discussions with National Life regarding housing development.
- Discussions with Greenway Institute highlighted need for more workforce/ student housing as the organization grows.
- Discussions with property owners about potential for relocating the fire house to another location, with the possibility of housing built above.
- A \$5M grant has been awarded for the Country club road infrastructure development.

Brief Updates:

Vacancy Ordinance – St. Johnsbury’s model has been identified as a relevant model with a focus on economic impact. A draft is in the works, and Matt J. is to recommend edits for the City Attorney to consider. The committee will review the draft at the next meeting.

Tax Stabilization - The measure was passed on Town Meeting Day. Now mirrors State standards.

Sprinklers – Alyssa presented the Committee’s recommendations for sprinkler requirements to the City Council at the last regular meeting. The Council has requested wording for potential revisions.

Planning Commission Coordination – Members from the planning Commission spoke and reported that they are well into their Unified Regulations review and welcome any feedback from the Committee.

State Matters – Lauren reported that the State is not currently looking at language change to the appeals process, but the Committee should develop recommendations to share with the State for future revisions. Sandy V. has been active in advocating at the State level, and stated that it is imperative that the City of Montpelier pursue Teir 1A status. Matt J. confirmed that this is the plan. Ben D. asked about Future Land Use Maps being drawn for the area, and that the committee and City staff should request a draft from CVRPC.

Development Regulations – Potential Revisions

Tim H. has reviewed other towns’ regulations, and preferred ones that effectively guide the user through the process, as opposed to many unconnected chapters. Let’s Build Homes’ proposed ROOT zones was discussed as a solution for implementing a State-wide residential overlay zone that allows housing construction which is exempt from hearings and appeals. Alyssa S. encouraged Tim H., Sandy V., and the rest of the Committee to recommend concrete revisions to the City Regs. for the Planning Commission to consider.

Housing Trust Fund – Potential Revisions

Sean S. and Dan C. shared the sub-committees draft revision of the Housing Trust Fund (HTF). The main revisions include the addition of a 4th initiative titled, Limited Grants & Loans. As proposed, this initiative would be open ended, with no affordability covenant. This initiative would be offered in subsequent funding rounds after the initial RFP is released which only includes the original three initiatives. The Committee did not vote to move this proposed revision forward, and Alyssa S. recommended a special meeting could be called if a vote was needed to have this revision included in this year’s HTF process.

Developer Feedback

Attending developers were asked to share their feedback on development challenges and opportunities.

Main opportunities discussed:

- CHIP Act
- Tax Stabilization
- Potential change to sprinkler regulation
- Knowledgeable and helpful zoning department staff
- Progress at CCR
- Planned Growth Areas
- Advocacy for “Yes in my back yard” YIMBY

Main challenges discussed:

- Appeals process. \$20K in legal fees was cited. Fear of appeal holds back developers.
 - Current sprinkler regulations increase project costs significantly.
 - City permit fees are significant. \$10-15K was cited for a medium scale development.
 - Cost of building new vs. conversion. New construction rarely pencils out unless it is subsidized, which is primarily only available for entities such as Downstreet.
 - Zoning regulations in general have not kept pace with the City’s significant housing goals.
 - Zoning regulations and the current City Plan only seek to preserve status quo, and not development.
 - Zoning regulations include character and dimensional standards in separate chapters, where they could be included on one page for ease of reference.
 - DRB process is difficult and expensive. DRB members have not been adequately trained, and continue to raise questions and concerns that are not within the legal purview of the Board.
 - Fire Department required access is not always consistent. A document with preferred access layouts was recommended for ease of planning.
 - Competition – easier to develop and build in surrounding towns.
 - Flood regulations add expense and complexity.
 - ACT 250 - 10 units in 5 miles rule has stalled many potential conversions and new development.
 - City regulations that duplicate State regulations should be eliminated.
 - Conditional use development always presents challenges, and housing should always be a permitted use.
 - NIMBY
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Next Meeting

Date: Tuesday, May 5

Time: 6:00 – 7:30p.m.

Location: Montpelier Senior Center

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Dan Wheeler

Date: March 9, 2026