

Montpelier Housing Committee - Meeting Minutes

Date: August 4, 2026

Recording start: 6:02 p.m. (call to order); adjourned approx. 8:05 p.m.

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

Staff Present: Mike Miller, Matt Jelacic

Public Present: Seamus Lombardo (presenter permitting/fee research), Nicola Anderson (presenter, Director of Real Estate Development, Downstreet), Rebecca (presenter, vacancy ordinance research), Steve Whitaker

1. Minutes

July 7 minutes approved. Motion by Sandy, second by Lauren. Dan Coppock abstained.

2. Public comment

Steve Whitaker raised objections to the Country Club Road process; including TIF projections, HUD rules, environmental RFP, and agricultural uses.

Ben Doyle responded for the record that much of the comment is factually inaccurate.

3. Housing Trust Fund update

- City Council adopted the committee's proposal unanimously.
- Round 1 is open and accepting applications now: grants up to \$10,000, zero-interest loans up to \$50,000, affordability component attached.
- Round 2, without the affordability component, will run only if funds remain.
- Committee reviews applications on receipt; may require a special meeting depending on timing.
- Press release circulated by Evelyn Prim. Application is also linked on the Planning Department website. Members asked to spread the word.

4. Development regulations and the Future Land Use Area (FLUA) map

Presented by Sandy Vitzum with Tim Heney.

Regulations work. The subcommittee is working at a structural level first: merging duplicated sections so each topic is covered once, and eliminating overlap with state review bodies. A first draft would cut the outside review timeline from 140 days to 108. Questions for the Planning Commission include section-by-section review and a priority housing overlay district.

FLUA map. First recommendations were due to the Land Use Review Board (LURB) by Friday, with revisions possible through December. The subcommittee has identified additional areas to be included in the map beyond what has been identified by the planning department.

Process decision. The committee will not file competing comments with LURB. Whatever the Planning Commission puts forward with Mike Miller stands as the city's position. The committee will keep working through the Planning Commission over the coming months to get more parcels into the process.

5. City updates (Matthew Jelacic)

87 and 89 Elm Street CDS. The congressionally directed spending award for Downstreet to elevate the buildings out of the floodplain is no longer adequate. The application went in in 2023; construction costs have risen enough to leave roughly a \$2 million gap. Downstreet asked the city to decline the money, but the congressional delegation has said the city cannot decline it. Work now focuses on identifying a project at those properties that FEMA will accept within the available budget.

Day and winter shelter. Site identification is underway. Matthew suggested a joint meeting with the Homelessness Committee, noting that the committee rarely discusses the full spectrum of housing need, particularly the 0 to 30 or 40 percent AMI range.

Montpelier Business Association. Matthew will speak the following morning on downtown homelessness, framing housing production as the only known solution to reducing homelessness.

6. Development Review Board process

Both the statutory 45 days from close of hearing to issuance of decision and the planning department's own aspirational 45 days from complete application to decision issued were discussed. Dan Wheeler and Nicola Anderson emphasized that the 45 day statutory window seemed excessive, out of the ordinary, and costly to owners. Alyssa suggested that where a decision is sitting with the chair for signature, staff should nudge it along, and vacation coverage should be planned so signature steps do not stall.

7. Permitting and fee study (Seamus)

Expanded from the June draft: 9 developer interviews now including large-scale developers and developers working across Central Vermont, plus city staff comment. Spreadsheet covers remodels, land development, single and multi-unit, for-sale and rental.

Recommendations presented:

1. Do not raise fees; consider waiving fees tied to fixed infrastructure (water and sewer) that already generate recurring revenue.
2. Audit review processes to confirm each body is operating within its remit.

3. Reduce billable professional hours, including avoiding routine cc of billable professionals on staff correspondence.

8. Fee schedule vote

Context: Mike Miller must bring a fee schedule to City Council at the end of the month.

The committee discussed municipal fees related to constructing housing as related to a pending increased fee schedule recommendation from the Planning Department. Different fee structures were discussed. Appeal fees were explicitly removed from consideration.

VOTE (passed, all in favor): Authorize the chair to go before City Council to ask that fee increases be held while the committee develops a counter-proposal to freeze or cut fees. Appeal fees excluded.

Follow-up assigned: Seamus to draft the fee proposal (percentage, duration, which fees), coordinating with Tim and Sandy.

9. Vacant property ordinance (Rebecca)

A new draft was presented which incorporated prior feedback

Next step: The chair, possibly with Rebecca, will take the concept to City Council to gauge the will of the Council before the committee invests in final language and a formal vote.

10. Committee priorities

Accomplished in the last year:

- \$100,000 for the Housing Trust Fund in the budget
- Tax stabilization policy updated to match the state level
- Local sprinkler ordinance changed
- Housing Trust Fund guidelines updated

In progress: short-term rental registration, vacancy ordinance, 802 Homes.

New and continuing priorities were raised. Including: A marketing package, A land bank, "Catastrophe proofing", regulatory recommendations, HomeShare Vermont, Form-based or pre-approved housing types, development review regulations, transitional housing as a pathway out of homelessness

Scheduling note

Next meeting conflicts with the DRB. September 8 was discussed; Labor Day blocks the Monday. The chair indicated she could move the meeting.