

Draft Minutes
Montpelier Housing Task Force
Feb. 17, 2022

In attendance: Brian Evans, Diane Sherman, Jo Troiano, Jack McCullough, RJ Adler, Carolyn Ridpath, Marty Roberts, Kevin Casey, Polly Nichol, Mike Miller, Peter Kelman

1. **Approval of Minutes from January meeting** – Jo moved and RJ seconded. All voted in favor

2. **Updates from Planning and Community Development Dept.**

Kevin reported that the Northfield Street project is going forward. The City received a VCDP Planning Grant for the Habitat for Humanity project. If the bond passes, there could possibly be housing on the Elks Club property.

Mike mentioned that an application still has not been submitted for the Bove project and that Christ Church is having some challenges moving forward with its housing project. The proposed amendments to city zoning will go to City Council on March 23rd. There is one additional change being proposed, a district boundary line adjustment for Sabin's Pasture requested by the owners. He noted that development on Sabin's Pasture make possibly occur.

3. **Elks Club property bond vote**

There was a long discussion about the bond vote for the Elks Club property. Kevin summarized the request and mentioned that there are only 3 parcels in Montpelier of comparable or larger size – Elks Club, Sabin's Pasture and Crestview. He voiced the opinion that we need to "seize the opportunity". Brian noted that this is an amazing opportunity to start a land bank. Kevin compared the price of this 138 acres to 1/10 acre parcels that recently sold for \$95,000 and \$140,000. Carolyn noted a concern that the public thinks the purchase price will be \$2 million. Jack said that at more than one City Council meeting they talked about a potential \$3 million purchase price depending on the outcome of an appraisal. There is \$1 million in the recreation fund reserve that the city is prepared to put towards the purchase.

RJ suggested that the Task Force put out a statement focusing on housing at the Elks Club property. All MHTF members present were willing to put their names on such a statement. (Liz Genge agreed as well, via email.) Jack volunteered to create a first draft. Peter and Polly volunteered to review and edit.

4. **Future of the Housing Task Force and Task Force Leadership**

Polly and Carolyn both spoke in favor of dissolving the Task Force and asking the City Council to create an official city housing committee. Brian asked if maybe that committee should include the Homelessness Task Force as well. Mike offered the opinion that the strength of the Task Force has been that it's a "group of engaged, knowledgeable people" and that it would be a different dynamic if it becomes a city

committee. Jo mentioned a desire to see it remain independent. Diane noted that she assumed it was an official committee of the city when she came to her first meeting. Jack said he doesn't think that city committees are constrained in advocacy etc. by being part of city government. He thinks it would make a statement for the city to have an official housing committee. After considerable discussion there was consensus to recommend that the City Council create an official housing committee to replace the Housing Task Force. (Note: the memo from Peter Kelman to the Task Force supports this idea.)

5. Any recommendations re. filling Kevin's position

Polly noted that the Community Development Specialist position is a huge job. Ideally that person would be able to provide more support to groups like the Housing Task Force but there is already too much to do. It was better when the city had VISTA members available to take minutes and help in other ways education and outreach. Mike explained that the job description grew with Kevin. He hopes that the next person can focus on developing more programs as opposed to projects. Polly asked if it's possible to get more support for housing. Mike responded that the city's role is to facilitate projects not to undertake them. He believes that one person can do the job as set forth in the job description. Peter said that putting the word "housing" in the position title would make a statement. He doesn't think one person can do it all.

6. Upcoming City Council Presentation

Jack will get the Task Force presentation on the Council's agenda for either April 13th or 27th. Brian volunteered to update some of the statistics from the presentation last June. Polly asked if there are additional recommendations that people are interested in making. Kevin said that the city should fund an ADU program.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.