

Draft Minutes
Montpelier Housing Task Force
April 21, 2022

In attendance: Jo Troiano, Carolyn Ridpath, Diane Sherman, Jack McCullough, Cary Brown, Marty Roberts, Polly Nichol, Zach Watson, Peter Kelman, Greg Gerdel from The Bridge

Minutes of March Meeting – Jo made a motion to approve; Carolyn seconded. All were in favor.

Updates

Jack report that at the last City Council meeting Mike Miller gave an update re. the Elks Club property. The planning process will take about a year. The city will hire a consultant to oversee it. Cary noted that there will be opportunities for more public input.

Jack also reported that the Council adopted the proposed zoning amendments with a couple of exceptions. There was a lot of conversation regarding removal of density requirements in a zone close to downtown. The Planning Commission was recommending this change but Mike doesn't support it without the adoption of additional other standards. That proposal probably won't come back to the Council right away. There was also a proposal regarding solar panels that wasn't approved because it requires further work. Jack mentioned that there was a fair amount of opposition to rezoning the Northfield Street Habitat parcel but the Council approved the amendment as recommended.

Kevin's replacement is Josh Jerome. He currently works on economic development in Randolph and formerly worked for the Randolph Area Community Development Corp.. He will start his work with the City on May 8th.

Report to City Council

Polly noted the continued rise in home purchase prices in Montpelier and asked if we want to again bring up the idea of a transfer tax surcharge on homes that cost above \$400,000. Diane said that \$400,000 is basically the price of a house in Montpelier now and such a charge would hit almost everyone. Zach noted that people are buying well beyond their means because that's all that's available. Realtors are buying houses with cash and giving a mortgage to the buyer.

Peter expressed a concern about getting the new housing committee up and running if the Task Force report to Council doesn't happen until the end of May, as currently scheduled. Jack agreed that it will take some time for the committee to be established because volunteers will be needed to serve on it. Coming before Council with a mission statement for the committee would save some time. Polly said she'll prepare a mission statement. Peter volunteered to help. Peter asked if the statement should suggest who should be members. Should there be a preference for Montpelier residents? The consensus was yes.

NIMBY Discussion

Diane began the conversation by saying she wanted this item on the agenda because NIMBY is a term that's thrown around a lot. Peter expressed the opinion that opposition to development has to do with perceived threats to property values. Carolyn noted that people fear change and that people of different demographics can be threatening. Zach remarked that most people agree in concept that more housing should be built but want it someplace else. He doesn't think of people with legitimate concerns as NIMBY. Diane expressed the opinion that opposition falls into different categories – what Zach described as well as people worried about particular impacts. People are attached to what currently exists.

Polly referred to the background materials that she sent prior to the meeting and said that she thought one of the most important points was to listen to what the opponents have to say. Peter said to bring people in early in the process. Jack expressed cynicism about the opposition to development in Montpelier and noted that developers don't want to be a pariah in a neighborhood. Diane said that the term NIMBY may not be helpful. Proponents of a project need to think about and focus on why people might be in opposition and what causes that opposition.

May Meeting

Polly asked if the group wants to continue the NIMBY discussion at the May meeting, beginning with the question regarding what are Montpelier's community characteristics and how can new housing contribute towards or detract from it. Carolyn suggested that Joshua Jerome should be involved in the discussion.

Jack suggested that the discussion include how we frame the conversation about development for people who aren't housing advocates.

Next meeting: May 19th