

## Minutes

### Housing Board, Town of Pound Ridge Meeting of February 8, 2010, at 4:30 PM Town House

Present: Suzy Beatty, Carol Powers, Mary LaTronica, Jerry Bisceglia, Kitty Wynkoop and Josina van der Maas (Chair), Paul McConville (Town Board Liaison), Ken Olsen was absent due to illness.

The Chair opened the meeting at 4:34 PM.

The Minutes of the Meeting of January 4, 2010, were approved.

The Chair reported that Jim Killoran of Habitat for Humanity will be invited to a future Housing Board meeting by Gary Warshauer.

Suzy Beatty reported that A-Home is fully occupied and that it passed a recent one year LIHTC requirement review for the property with flying colors.

We changed the order of the agenda to first brainstorm our ideas for a Housing Referendum, to be approved by the Town Board for inclusion on the ballot in November.

There are four main phases to the referendum process:

1. Develop the goals and wording
2. Get Town Board approval to put it on the ballot in November
3. File with the Board of Elections
4. Develop and execute a marketing plan

Josina provided some background information on the Open Space Acquisition Fund (OSAF, committee chaired by Tom Anderson), discussed at the Supervisor's Forum on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February. Josina obtained the projection of \$372,000 for 2010 from the Tax Assessor's office based on \$1 per \$1000 assessed valuation. The thinking of the OSAF committee is to keep that method of taxation, rather than go to a 2% Real Estate Transfer Tax on house sales at or above the median sales price (to be charged to the buyer). This they considered less fair and more problematic due to fluctuation in the number of sales due to changes in the economy. The original referendum was approved 10 years ago. There have been no final decisions about the next referendum with respect to method of taxation, duration, etc.

The Housing Board has two choices to consider with respect to method of taxation:

1. Real Estate Tax based on assessed valuation of all homes
2. Real Estate Transfer Tax, to be paid by the seller on houses above the current median price

There are advantages and disadvantages to both. It is hard for people, especially seniors on limited income, to pay more taxes in this economy. On the other hand, "taxing the rich" is not so

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popular either, although Josina pointed out at the Supervisor's Forum that people who buy the higher-priced homes are still going to buy in this geographical area and are not likely to go to North Carolina or other less expensive regions. The Housing Board did not yet make a decision as to method of taxation until further information is available.

We also discussed whether we should offer a joint referendum with the OSAF committee as had been suggested in previous meetings, or to go it alone. The Housing Board voted unanimously to submit a separate Housing Referendum. Suzy will obtain a copy of the OSAF referendum as a reference.

We next discussed the **goals of the referendum** to create the Housing Fund. In broad outline, yet to be refined and discussed, we said that these are the most important:

- Retain seniors
- Retain/attract volunteers in essential services – Fire Department and Ambulance Corps
- Provide moderately-priced housing (not “affordable” as defined by the County) for the above categories
  - To buy
  - To rent
  - Without income restrictions
- Retain Pound Ridge “style and feel”
- Maintain/increase housing diversity

Again in broad terms, the **purpose of the Housing Fund** thus created will be:

- Purchase of land for building moderately-priced housing
- Refurbishing of existing, moderately-priced homes
- Low-interest loans to senior residents for the building of Accessory Apartments
- Incentives for developers to build moderately-priced housing (for instance by off-setting the cost of building the homes or buying the land)

Any housing stock thus created will be regulated by the Housing Board as to price/rent, resale restrictions and occupancy based on priority lists and categories. We will further develop these concepts and provide examples.

The question of how Bedford's Blue Mountain Corporation spends its funds. Josina will get this information.

Next we talked about how to market the referendum to people and explain the benefits of the Housing Fund to those who are not in the two categories who would benefit. Some of the “talking points” we will use in our marketing campaign:

- Many volunteers are themselves seniors, and since much work in Pound Ridge gets done by volunteers, on boards, commissions, committees and other groups, losing volunteers makes it harder for our town to function
- Many people want to stay here when they retire, and one day you may be one of those

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- Seniors pay taxes like everyone else, and since they don't have children, they reduce the school taxes for those who do have children (school taxes constitute about two-thirds of the total annual tax bill)
- The Pound Ridge "culture" is enriched by its long-term residents
- "Think of your parents" – even if you are not a senior, you may want to have your parents near you, and if they don't qualify for Scotts Ridge, where are they going to go?

We need a list of all the boards, commissions and other volunteer organizations in order to get a feeling of how many of them are seniors and how many in total there are.

Note: we need to add items for the Fire Department and Ambulance Corps. The Fire Department is getting low on members, and they are getting older on average. A paid Fire Department is the alternative, which would result in a big tax hike. Josina will get the numbers from Ray Clark.

Paul initiated the discussion on what could realistically be accomplished with the Housing Fund, since at current rate it would be about \$370,000 per year, and how could we justify providing just one unit? Josina mentioned that the subject of borrowing against anticipated revenue came up at the Supervisor's Forum as well. If you take that into account, we have a broader view:

### **10-year outlook (assuming Real Estate Tax):**

- \$370,000 per year at 1% per \$1000 assessed valuation
- Over 10 years: \$3,000,000 minimum
- Assuming \$200,000 per individual initiative, this results in 15 projects
- Assuming 2 units built/refurbished per project results in 30 units
  - 8 volunteers/workforce
  - 22 senior

Even if we change the assumptions and produce only half of that over ten years, it will be a creditable effort.

Paul mentioned that the referendum has to go to the Town Board for approval at one of their May meetings, no later.

Last on the agenda was the development of the model for senior and workforce housing as we see it. We used the results of the 2007 Housing Survey to define it:

### **What do seniors want?**

- Relatively small house
- Outside and inside maintenance
- Detached or attached
- One floor of living space (could have additional floor for guest space)
- 2 bedrooms
- 2 to 2 ½ bathrooms
- Garage for 2 cars/carport

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- terrace
- \$400,000 - \$700,000
- Ownership

### **What does the workforce need?**

- Family space, so a somewhat larger house than seniors
- Outdoor space for children to play in
- At least one more bedroom than the seniors need
- Rental
- Opportunity to make money by providing maintenance

All of these ideas will be discussed again at the next meeting. Housing Board members are encouraged to share their comments and ideas before the next meeting.

**Note that the next meeting date has been changed to Monday, March 8, 2010 at 4:30 PM.**

The meeting closed at 7:48 PM.

Josina van der Maas, Chair