



OBSERVER REPORT

FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE (FHC) – March 17, 2022 at the Jacobi Community Center and via Zoom LWVM Observer – Bonnie Grenier

Members Present -Debby Larkin, Dirk Isbrandtsen, Mimi Hollister, Teri McDonough, Deacon Joseph Whipple, Katie Farrell, Frank Evans
Guests: Louis Meyi, Christi Staples

Christi Staples, who works for United Way, was introduced as the newest member of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) Board. Dirk, Kurt, Teri and the 5 Selectmen are the other committee members. One “at large” seat remains to be filled. The hope is that the AHTF Board will hold its first meeting in the near future.

There was a question about how the search for a new Town Administrator (TA) was going. Louis Meyi reported that at the BOS meeting on March 16th, two representatives from the UMass Collins Center, consultants on the search, presented the results of their interviews with the BOS and various town officials. Concern amongst the FHC members was that there seemed to have been a lack of input from the community in this process, and that there appears to be no mention of the preference for applicants to have experience in the areas of affordable housing and social justice issues.

Bob Neuss is expected to have his interview with the BOS next week for the vacant seat on the FHC. Apparently, another person has expressed interest in being appointed to the position.

There are concerns that the Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee has not met since October. There was discussion about who on that committee can call a meeting. Kurt will reach out to Becky Cutting and Moses Grader to see about how to move the process forward.

Debby is still waiting for information from committee members indicating what other towns have affordable housing trust funds, where their money comes from and how it is utilized. This information, along with contact information for people on the various trust fund boards in the other communities, will be put on a spreadsheet and shared with the HPPIC.

At the request of Lou Meyi, the committee discussed the implications of Article 33 on the town warrant which has to do with using the parcel of land at the corner of Green Street and West Shore Drive for an off-road bike park. The request in the article is being made to "The Town", but in fact the property is owned by the School Department. The HPP and other studies going back even further, have all emphasized the need to keep that piece of land available for the development of affordable housing at some point in the future. Lou and Debby will write a letter to the School Department with a cc. to Moses Grader, to advise them on this matter, requesting a response to their letter. The FHC members were not necessarily against allowing the temporary use (for some number of years) for a bike park, but with the understanding that the ultimate use is designated for affordable housing. FHC members will try to reach out to the sponsors of this article to discuss their concerns.

Dirk would like the to put a discussion of the open meeting law on the agenda for the next meeting. He would like some clarification as to what is allowed/disallowed under the open meeting law and is also interested in exploring the possibility of creating an Executive Committee for the FHC.