

**MINUTES OF ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
St. Albans City Hall  
100 No. Main St. St. Albans VT  
Meeting Date: March 26, 2014**

<b>PC Members</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Recused</b>
<b>Chris Dermody Chair</b>	<b>x</b>		
<b>Jeff Bean</b>	<b>x</b>		
<b>David Barber</b>	<b>x</b>		
<b>Peter Ford</b>		<b>x</b>	
<b>Ryan Doyle</b>	<b>x</b>		
<b>Stacie Callan</b>		<b>x</b>	
<b>Tom Murphy</b>		<b>x</b>	

**Staff Present**

**Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development**

**Robin Morrill, Minute Taker**

**Greta Brunswick: Senior Planner for Northwest Regional Planning Commission**

**Public Present**

**Elizabeth Gamache**

**Jason Bruley**

**Linda Ryan**

**Meeting called to order by Chris Dermody, Chair at 6:30 P.M.**

**1. Discuss objectives of Housing Study:**

To find facts regarding the different types of housings currently in the City of St. Albans, to determine the best way to accurately gather said facts for further evaluation and determinations, and to discuss housing needs at the current time of the study.

E. Gamache acknowledged the extensive endeavor that was about to be underway, expressed her support and excitement regarding it, thanked the board for what they do and also for undertaking the housing study.

Introductions of board & staff to the public.

**2. Discussion of housing from City Records**

C. Sawyer stated that the City has a State grant, that NRPC can fit the project into its current schedule and that the City can get started immediately with them. NRPC's roll to be discussed.

G. Brunswick has put together a list types of data that are available for suggestions for gathering

data for this study. Most of the info to come from secondary sources.

C. Sawyer reference handouts provided to those present regarding online information of the available St. Albans City Census data 5 year average (2008-2012) questionnaire. C. Sawyer explained that there is a lot of information out there but not for the specific questions that would be pertinent to this study. The City lacks comprehensive guidance that is fact based that can illustrate housing needs, consequences of certain projects and basic guides for the City on what kinds of needs to support.

The project ends in May 2015, has been authorized by the City Council, overseen by the Planning Commission, staffed by the City Department of Planning and Development, the NRPC and G. Brunswick and her staff.

Study's six major questions when first designed

1. What is the nature of the City's current housing stock
2. What are market rents in the City
3. What critical needs exist for housing
4. What are the effects of subsidized housing on the private rental market and vice versa
5. What is the effect of subsidized housing on the City's grand list
6. What are some ways to insure the proper maintenance of housing in the City and the residential quality of life of our neighborhoods.

City sources of information:

Grand List and the Rental Inspection Inventory

Data reviewed suggests a surprising number of single family homes being rented.

J. Bean requested clarification of declared homestead

C. Dermody asked if people would be in a position to claim declared homestead erroneously? C. Sawyer responded that while reviewing he did see some oddities, ie: empty lots being claimed as declared homesteads yet they could possibly be explained after deeper review.

### **Overhead Presentation of the following:**

Study Questions & Goals

Housing Data

City Data-Residential

City Data-Rentals

City Data-Values

Act 75 Valuation of Subsidized Housing

### **Questions & Comments:**

G. Brunswick questioned the frequency of the data updates for the Rental Inspection Inventory.

C. Sawyer responded that it could possibly be updated on a monthly or even weekly base yet he was not positive on the actual frequency of updates.

C. Sawyer stated that zoning files could help determine if certain types of housings affect the value of other properties nearby.

G. Brunswick stated that going forward we need to be using the term subsidized housing versus affordable housing. Affordable housing is different for different income levels.

C. Dermody asked if there was a source for information regarding the requirements for qualifications for subsidized housing and should the study include this information. G. Brunswick stated that there should be a list of requirements available from the Housing Authority.

C. Dermody questioned Act 75 and if it were Federally or State funded. C. Sawyer responded that it was a State rule that was triggered by a Federal subsidy.

J. Bean questioned the change in the surrounding properties and if that was an effect of subsidized housing nearby in other communities.

C. Sawyer stated that zoning files could be very useful regarding subsidized housing and how it has an effect on surrounding properties: ie: Estate homes being changed to several units and what was happening in the surrounding area before and after that change.

R. Doyle questioned the cost of zoning files becoming electronic/digitized and its long term benefit. C. Sawyer responded that it would be a substantial undertaking both tedious and timely, but one that he was starting to look into for a future initiative.

J. Bruley doesn't feel that many single family houses have been converted to multi family units in the last 10 years.

C. Sawyer: One thing that could hamper the analysis of the Act 75 effect today is that the City has not been assessing tax exempt properties nor properties assessed by a different method. Most of these properties have a \$0 value on the grand list.

### 3. Discuss roles and next steps:

G. Brunswick offered the following:

Major categories to look at:

Rental housing

Sub housing

Home owners

Elderly

Special needs

With that info, discuss problems & solutions

What to support in the future

Developing a list of professionals in the community to survey:

IE: Rental housing professionals & Home ownership real estate & developer professionals

### **4. Other Business**

C. Dermody stated that he would like to include Veterans Housing in the study.

D. Barber suggested that Veterans housing be contacted and added to this survey.

J. Bruley cannot think of a source for the information needed and suggests that it could be knocking on doors.

R. Doyle- suggested using the Lister cards and increasing the information on them for future use in projects such as this and come up with some of our own terms to make the cards more informational for the future.

C. Sawyer: Every data source has its own limitations.

G. Brunswick stated that the US Census will have highest number of misinformation/errors

J. Bean Suggests researching trends that are happening in other communities and how they correlate to the housing options.

J. Bean: What are the impacts to the community based on specific types of housings in any one given community?

D. Barber suggested sources for rental information ie: real estate agencies, The messenger or other classified ads.

### **Public Comment**

L. Ryan stated that there is not adequate housing for the poorest of the poor in the City and stated that research suggests that a person earning minimum wage would have to work 85-90 hours a week to afford even what is considered affordable housing now.

J. Bean discussed resources available that may be needed for those qualifying for low income housing.

L. Ryan stated that efficiency apartments were definitely lacking in the city & discussed men paying child support cannot rent on their own and that she has been placing two and three of these folks together in one apartment.

J. Bruley can provide rental costs and availability easily as he tracks it regularly.

J Bean & J. Bruley discussed non profit housing units values with same square footage as a owner rented property values and the reasons in the difference of each.

R. Doyle described how assessments are done.

R. Doyle suggests digitizing zoning files & linking it with GIS.

J. Bruley discussed that maintenance of building and the types of renters that apply, ie: when a building is kept up you attract a different type of tenant versus a run down property and the type of tenants that it attracts.

L. Ryan- the homeless are from here and not from out of state, drug dealers are more of a problem than the homeless.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 pm was made by R. Doyle, seconded by J. Bean with all in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Morrill  
Minute Taker