

## **Abandoned and Derelict Properties Task Force**

### **Minutes\***

1<sup>st</sup> meeting – Thursday 6/18 at 11am

Meeting called to order at 11:11am.

Appointed to and attending this first committee meeting are: Planning Board member, Dan Girard, Board of Assessors member, until appointed Assessor Clerk Carlene Millet representing, Select Board member, Beth Bandy, Board of Health member(s), Rob Lingle as appointed and Doug Telling as the alternate, attending, and committee chair Town Administrator. Invited guests attending the meeting are Health Agent Glen Ayers, and Treasurer/Collector Lynn Hathaway. Throughout this process interested parties will be invited to check in with the Task Force.

The purpose of our first meeting is to organize, and establish our approach to and timeline for the charge. The purpose of our charge is to give us the organizational structure to be able to apply for an increased level of funding that is 1) addressing a significant problem and 2) creating a tool to justify the town's need to help create the argument to apply for a significant amount of funding.

Rob stated that we currently have a CDBG grant, w/ Heath as the fiscal administrator. Lynn asked if people know there's opportunity. Beth stated we will look at all the funding available and how to let people know about it. Lynn was concerned. Rob thinks that we'll want to address issues with low income homeowners.

Beth asked how we can move forward on this. Beth has done research on other local cities, start w/ a list, and create buckets of projects. Rob agrees that we start with the highest priority, such as properties we're already working on, and then create a phase of assessment that offers a snapshot. Glen said maybe that; maybe that what we're doing is a community needs assessment. It's not to point out what's wrong, but to identify needs.

Lynn brought up that another issue is the current tax payer not maintaining their property. Beth said that was similarly brought up at the FRCOG workshop on Receiverships. Rob said there are several factors that will affect our priorities. What's our biggest priority? How do we establish criteria?

Beth recalled that when MJ Adams came to us in the past, the name was off-putting. Peg asked if we should consider a different name for our committee. Community Improvement Plan, Community needs assessment committee? Glen suggesting we get guidance from MJ Adams, and that the mission of this group is to consider how to come up with an honest needs assessment.

Lynn said that the mentality of the some townspeople in the past has been not to improve their properties so that they don't have to incur increased taxes. Peg asked if educating the community is a concern, and assumed that part of the process is educating the community, if money becomes available.

Doug said we need to categorize properties. The committee suggested different categories: urgent/ time-sensitive, derelict, condemned, location, uncooperative, hoarder, commercial/ residential/ owner-occupied, occupied, abandoned. Glen suggests if action can be taken before the town ends up owners of these properties, the town would be better off, allow distressed properties to be renovated. Dan Girard brought up the Charlemont Inn, saying if we don't put up money, and lose the well as a public water supply, we lose that property altogether. The Inn is the number one priority of these properties. Rob made a suggestion that the Inn and the Sherman properties be the highest priorities, and that next categories would be owner occupied, and condition: whether there's evidence of financial instability. For the Charlemont Inn, this process started with a neighborhood complaint. The BOH is going through their process. Glen asking should the committee consider bringing in the A.G.O.'s for a site review?

Dan made a motion and Beth 2<sup>nd</sup> d a motion for the Charlemont Inn and the Sherman Properties to be the highest priorities. Voted unanimously.

Beth made a motion and Dan 2<sup>nd</sup> d a motion to contact the A.G.O.s office to see if they'd be interested in a site visit to the Charlemont Inn? Discussion: Beth asked what the role of this board is, we support, but whose role is to invite them in? Rob brought up that there's a big difference between a building inspectors vs. BOH, which public health laws will dictate, and that the BOH would be happy to bring things to the committee. Beth clarified, asking what this motion specifically leads to. Glen shared that contacting the A.G.O's brings no obligation to the town, that the A.G. would appreciate the opportunity, and that the town is not engaging in a contract/business. The motion was revised, for Peg to gather information from the A.G.O.'s. Beth made motion, Dan 2<sup>nd</sup> d it, voted unanimously.

Doug stated that this is about prioritizing; as he understood the purpose of this committee, it was to assess each property. Dan suggested if we're approaching by property, do we think it would be smart to have a running tally of how much time it's costing the town? Lynn suggested we move the tax title taking from the G/L to Special Revenue. In the tax title equation: the charges being incurred will be included. Glen stated that properties w/ large municipal liens will not qualify for receivership. Dan reinforced that to substantiate our case we'll want to tally related expenses.

Peg asked if any action can be taken related to the Sherman property. Glen shared that as Brownfield project properties, the grant money is currently being used to look at ground water samples, and get estimates of brownfield damage, but they need access. They will need to get access through the resident. Without the resident they will need to go through court. Rob made a motion that the committee wants to see Glen begin the process of getting site access to the Sherman properties, Beth 2<sup>nd</sup> it, voted unanimously.

Beth asked if we want a list of priority projects and the date of last action/ next action. Do we want some kind of activity report through Google docs? Dan stated that if Glen needs a letter of endorsement from the committee, does the committee want to authorize Peg to sign a letter on behalf of the board after obtaining a vote by email? Dan put forward as a motion, Beth 2<sup>nd</sup> d, voted unanimously.

We will create a template; at the top will be greatest # of priorities. As list is created the criteria may become obvious for us to break out comments into more useful information. Dan asked if Lynn can provide last contact into comments, and create as “date of last action?”

Next meeting July 9<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, 5pm; goal review the template

Each member will email suggesting 5 properties for committee review. We can ask safety dept.s if they have suggestions.

Beth makes a motion that Peg reach out to the safety dept.s Doug said Cheryl found data showing that 10% of houses are vacant. Discussion whether safety depts. have access to data and know of hoarder situations. Doug suggested contacting Nat'l Grid. Rob sees a lot of multi-use places. Dan 2<sup>nd</sup> motion. Voted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:59.

\*The above are DRAFT minutes until approved by Task Force members.