

Submitted by: TOWN OF PHIPPSBURG Approved by Selectmen:
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
John M. Young ADMINISTRATOR
Administrator MINUTES
June 6, 2007

Meeting convened at 6:00 p.m. with Selectmen Douglass, Perkins and Pye in attendance.

I. Review and Sign:

1. Accounts payable and payroll warrants.
2. Minutes

All items reviewed and signed.

II. Meetings and Hearings:

1. Meet with Katrina Van Dusen to discuss affordable housing.

Selectmen met with Katrina Van Dusen (Regional Planner for Midcoast Council for Business Development and Planning), John Hodge (Brunswick Housing Authority) and Tara Hill (Habitat for Humanity). Also Merry Chapin, Frank Roberts and Connie Shiebler were in attendance.

Ms. Van Dusen explained that she had attended a prior meeting with the Selectmen where affordable housing was discussed – but wanted to come back with a more detailed presentation. Three years ago she sent out a survey to area towns and found that Open Space was their first concern with Affordable Housing coming in as a close second. She explained that they were attending this meeting to share their experiences and tools used to increase affordable housing on a regional basis. John Hodge provided a handout of community information which showed that the median home in Phippsburg costs \$308,500 and the median income is \$55,730 (a person earning this income could afford a house at or below \$176,456). He explained that his definition of “Affordable Housing” is that a person having a median income should be able to afford a median home. In Brunswick a group got together and made revisions to land use ordinances in order to enhance the development of affordable housing. He added that other communities are facing the same issues as Phippsburg, such as Harpswell where they are forming a housing trust. Mr. Hodge explained that “affordable” does not mean “cheap”.

Mr. Hodge presented plans for two different subdivisions that he has developed. The first was the 14 unit subdivision “Garrison Grove” in Brunswick on 2.7 acres which serves families in the 50% to 120% of median income bracket. The units cost \$150,000 due to grants and were sold for \$120,000 with covenant restrictions on resale. He added that one of the lots was donated to Habitat for Humanity. The second was “Hamilton Place” in Harpswell which consists of 22 acres and 15 homes. Mr. Hodge explained that Harpswell’s zoning was not as favorable to affordable housing as Brunswick’s, however they did have an alternative subdivision program.

Selectman Perkins asked if the subdivisions were on public water. Mr. Hodge replied that the subdivision in Brunswick was but the one in Harpswell was not, however they had shared septic systems and wells (2 units on each). He further explained that there was a homeowners association which would share costs and covenants were in place to insure that the units remain affordable for 50 years.

Terry Allen reviewed the Habitat for Humanity program. Contrary to popular belief they do not give homes away – they sell them. People in the 25% to 60% of median income qualify for purchase of a home. Families must be in need, have ability to pay, and be willing to partnership. So far they have renovated/constructed 26 homes in the area, including homes in Bath, Brunswick, Bremen, Bowdoinham and Georgetown. She described some of the homes and neighborhoods they have created.

Selectman Pye asked the representatives to expand on the density bonus, which they did. He also asked who manages the sale of homes. Mr. Hodge replied that the towns have an ordinance which controls the establishment and management of the affordable housing and the housing authority oversees the management on behalf of the towns. He further explained that a town does not necessarily need its own housing authority - it could establish a committee or use another town's authority. There are different ways of funding the authority such as assessing a fee.

Selectman Pye asked if many developers are willing to take advantage of a density bonus to provide some affordable housing. Ms. Van Dusen replied that Cape Elizabeth offers a density bonus and also requires regular subdivisions to have a certain number of medium income houses. Mr. Hodge replied that no developer in Brunswick has taken advantage of the density bonus yet. He added that all the studies conducted in the region show that the area will bounce back from the Navy Base closure and that the current base housing will be filled.

Ms. Van Dusen stated that the Subdivision Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan for Phippsburg seems to make a provision for density bonus. Also, one of the strategies of the Comprehensive Plan is to educate the public on easement tax breaks and current use programs. She offered to help with the "tool kit". She explained that another goal would be to create a local housing authority. She comes from a small town of 100 which has a Housing Board and has created 3 affordable units. She had heard from some people in Phippsburg that there might be town owned land available for affordable housing and that takes the premium cost out of building such housing.

Selectman Perkins asked the representatives to expand on what a Housing Trust is. Mr. Hodge replied that the Trust would be a 501(c) (3) tax exempt entity established to oversee affordable housing. It would have a set of bylaws which would guide the way Trust conducts business. Ms. Van Dusen added that in her municipality the citizens at town meeting convened a study committee who recommended the establishment of a Housing Trust. This Trust became a 501(c) (3) corporation under an exempt clause

“lessening a burden on the government” which allowed them to receive a community block grant through the town. In comparison, a Housing Authority is a political authority of the state by statute (like a water district) and the appointing body is the town government.

Selectman Douglass stated that according to the figures he was reviewing 77.3% of the houses sold in 2006 were considered not affordable which left only 22% that was. He asked what we should be looking at in the coastal community. Mr. Hodge replied that figures can lie and he won't speculate, but maybe some of the homes were not decent dwellings. Selectman Douglass asked how many affordable houses were in town now and stated that he had a concern about the people who live in town at the present time – not about those that may want to come here later. Mr. Hodge replied that the figures are updated annually and he would obtain the latest figures from Bob King and forward them to the town.

Selectman Douglass stated that there are some areas in town where people can't afford to live and there are other areas where less expensive land is provided to put trailers and doublewides on. One solution may be to require that developers provide a % of their homes in a subdivision as affordable housing. He added that the Town needs to find out how much affordable housing there is and can't go by sales. Mr. Hodge replied that they were here to help and are not saying that there isn't any affordable housing in town. Ms. VanDuesen discussed ordinances written by other towns which assisted in the development of affordable housing.

Connie Shiebler recommended that the town find out why people are leaving the town – was it because there is a lack of jobs or because people cannot afford the housing? We need to look at those who live in town and try to keep them here. There should be a way to insure that some of the homes in a subdivision are kept for town residents.

Selectman Douglass stated that his main concern is the elderly. Mr. Hodge replied that it would help to change the ordinances to allow multi-unit cluster housing.

Merry Chapin asked if Habitat from Humanity built homes could they be restricted to those who live in Phippsburg. Tara Hill replied that there is a requirement that an individual live in the area for one year – however a person does not jump to the top of the list because they are a resident of a the town. Ms. Chapin asked if any community had partnered with a local Land Trust for the development of affordable housing. Mr. Hodge replied that the Town of Harpswell had.

III. Unfinished Business

1. Discuss enforcement action of consensual agreement for the removal of the Danish's house on Fiddlers Reach.

Lee Rainey, Code Enforcement Officer, explained that several months ago the Danish's house on Fiddlers Reach Road was declared a health nuisance. He had brokered a consensual agreement with the owners, Neil and Vera Danish, to have them demolish the building. He has given them

several time extensions since and it is now time to enforce the agreement.

Selectmen Douglass asked if the Danish's were going to tear down the structure and rebuild. Mr. Rainey replied that originally the Fire Department was going to do a controlled burn on the building but it was declared unsafe to do so. Selectman Douglass asked if there was a possibility that an organization would build a replacement home for the Danish's and Mr. Rainey replied that they were working with Coastal Economic Development on it. He added that he had sent a second demolition notice to the Danish's in April. Selectman Douglass stated that the Town will probably end up tearing down the building and placing a lien on the property. He asked that Mr. Rainey contact the Danish's and have them meet with the Selectmen.

Selectman Douglass asked what was being done with the second nuisance home that belonged to Vera Danish's mother. Mr. Rainey explained that that the State now owns the property and that the building has asbestos siding on it. Selectman Douglass asked if the State will remove the building or would the town remove it and then bill the State. He recommended that we send a letter to the State giving them the option.

Selectman Pye asked if there is an estimate on demolishing the Danish's house.

Selectman Perkins recommended that the Town send a registered letter to the Danish's asking them to meet with the Selectmen to discuss options and if they are financially incapable of demolishing the building the Town would accomplish it and recover the cost through a special tax on the property.

The Town Administrator will send a letter to the Danish's requesting that they contact the Code Enforcement Officer within 10 days to inform him of their intentions in regards to the property. If they fail to do so they are to meet with the Board of Selectmen on July 11th to discuss options. If they fail to do either then the Town will start the legal process for demolition.

2. Consider applications for the position of Health Officer.

One application has been received from Sue Jones for the position of Health Officer. Selectman Douglass recused himself from the meeting because Ms. Jones is his spouse. Selectmen Perkins and Pye reviewed the application and choose not to enter into executive session. Selectman Perkins stated that Ms. Jones, who is also the Rescue Chief, was well qualified for the position. Selectmen Perkins and Pye voted (2-0) to appoint Sue Jones as the Health Officer effective July 1st.

IV. New Business

1. Accept a Fire Department Grant from Maine Municipal Association
The Selectmen voted (3-0) to accept a grant of \$1,670.00 from Maine Municipal Association to be used to purchase protective equipment for firefighters using chainsaws.
2. Transfer Station recycling report
Selectmen reviewed report.

V. Courses and seminars

1. Senior Spectrum "Meals on Wheels" meeting.
The Town Administrator will attend.

VI. Selectmen/Administrator Comments and Announcements

1. E-mail on Fort Baldwin Road

The Selectmen read an e-mail concerning the poor condition of Fort Baldwin Rd. They explained that the elected Road Commissioner is responsible for the road and he has been in contact with DEP to see what they will allow for repairs. They recommended that Senator Benoit and Representative Percy become involved on behalf of the town.

VII. Adjournment - Selectmen voted (3-0) to adjourn at 7:20 p.m.