



Chittenden County Housing Convening
January 30, 2023 @ 6pm
Held on Zoom

Attendees:	
Bill Ward, Burlington Permitting & Inspections	Patty Wehman, Burlington Permitting & Inspections
Beth Whitlock, Hinesburg AHC	Cathynn LaRose, Colchester Planning Director
Regina Mahony, Essex Junction City Manager	Elaine Wang, Winooski City Manager
Carl Bohlen, Hinesburg AHC	Chuck Lacy, Jericho AHC
Connor Daley, Winooski Planning Commission	Dave Ganter, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Diane Clemens, Essex Junction Planning Commission	John Alden, Essex Junction DRB & AIA VT
Darrilyn Peters, South Burlington AHC	Sarah Jane "SJ" Dube, Jericho AHC
Melinda Scott, Williston Planning Staff	Sandra Dooley, South Burlington AHC
Jess Hyman, CVOEO	Robert Millar, Winooski Housing Commission
Phil Batalion, Essex Junction	Todd Rawlings, Burlington CEDO
Virginia Clarke, Richmond PC and AHC	Pam Brangan, Shelburne Housing Committee
Joyce George, Shelburne Housing Committee	Taylor Newton, CCRPC
Mark Hall, Richmond Housing Committee	Melanie Needle, CCRPC
Frederika Keating, Jericho AHC	Charlie Baker, CCRPC
Bruce Wilson	Darren Schibler, CCRPC
Brian Pine, Burlington City Council	Mike O'Brien, Winooski Housing Commission

Notes

I. Welcome

- II. Burlington Rental Inspection Program - Bill Ward, City of Burlington.** Bill provided a presentation on the Burlington Department of Permitting and Inspections (DPI), its history, and responsibilities. DPI oversees rental housing inspections, health inspections, zoning and development review, trades permitting, and vacant building enforcement. [See slides](#) for details. Burlington's new online permit / inspection software, which also allows for online registration and inspection scheduling costs about \$40,000-\$50,000 annually. Appeals of Department decisions go to the City's Housing Board of Review.

Patty Wehman noted that most inspections are routine issues like smoke detectors. She also noted that their department has taken on inspection of short-term rentals.

Q&A

- a. Carl Bohlen: how do smaller communities determine if they have rental units that are deficient? Bill guesses that most rentals are well-maintained, but maybe 10% are problematic. Low vacancy rates mean less competition and more problems that aren't fixed. Most people do the right thing because it's right, but you need a system for those that aren't. Also refer to the statewide Town Health Officer inspection checklist.
- b. Jess Hyman noted that the Vermont Tenant's Hotline hears many complaints, but finds that Burlington's department is very helpful in getting issues resolved and being proactive.
- c. Phil Batalion: has DPI noticed an increase in non-compliance fees recently due to the backlog in contractors / supply chain issues? Bill: not a huge difference due to the pandemic, but DPI is able to be flexible if resolutions are properly documented. Also, does DPI notice an impact to non-compliant property owners who need financial assistance? DPI does try to connect them with resources that are available and support their requests. Lots of programs available for lead paint abatement, energy efficiency improvements.
- d. Friederike Keating: how does DPI communicate with renters about the online inspection system? DPI coordinates outreach with CEDO, USCRI for refugee / immigrant populations, and the Office of Student and Community Relations (most calls come from parents of students). It's important to reach people before they sign a lease so they can review the property's history.
- e. Sandra: how does Burlington's housing code compare to the statewide code? Brian Pine: Burlington rental housing code is substantially equivalent to the state code but has more areas that are covered by a routine inspection system. Complaint-based inspections are a poor way to ensure that tenants are protected from substandard conditions.
- f. Jess Hyman: what percentage of Burlington's Housing Board of Review cases are appeals of DPI decisions vs. security deposit issues? Bill finds that appeals of non-security deposit issues are rare because the department is fair and thorough.
- g. Virginia Clarke: can the reinspection fee apply to only a single unit in a multi-unit building? Bill said it would only apply to a single unit.
- h. Bruce Wilson: what are the fines for graffiti on buildings? Burlington Police can ticket for graffiti if caught in the act, but DPI cannot do this.
- i. Virginia Clarke: does DPI treat short-term rentals the same as long-term rentals? Yes. Getting STRs to register as required can take at least 6 months, but only about 270 were non-compliant at first.
- j. Brian Pine: Fees being collected for Burlington's short-term rental are going directly into the Housing Trust Fund.
- k. Jess Hyman: Two more Qs: 1) Do nonprofit housing orgs (CHT and Cathedral Square) pay a lower registration fee? Patty: No, but there are exemptions. 2) Would you ever consider an incentive-based program that would give property owners a discount on registration fees if they attend trainings? Bill: refer to the ordinance.

III. CCRPC Update

- a. ECOS Plan Update
 1. Taylor noted that adoption of the new regional plan has been delayed due to staffing changes as well as providing a chance for the Equity Advisory Committee

to provide input. Two plan elements will proceed this year: the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

2. One major change: CCRPC will target 90% of new housing to areas planned for growth instead of 80%.
- b. [CCRPC Housing Dashboard](#) and [Building Homes Together Dashboard](#)

IV. Legislative Updates

- a. H.68 & Senate Omnibus Housing Bill
 1. Highlights: restricts municipalities from requiring more than one parking space per dwelling for ALL housing. Requires minimum density of 5 dwellings per acre within water and sewer service areas. H.68 has a “duplex by right” language allowing duplexes anywhere a single-unit home is allowed, and triplexes and 4-plexes by right in water/sewer areas. Height bonus for mixed-use and affordable housing. Restricts municipalities’ ability to regulate emergency shelters through zoning. “By-right zoning:” development review boards cannot restrict parking, lot size, setbacks, and density beyond what the underlying zoning allows. Changes to Act 250.
- b. H.111 Workforce Housing
 1. More funding for housing programs, municipal bylaw and planning grants, and Act 250 changes (no permit in downtowns and village centers, eliminating appeal by 10 residents or property owners).
- c. Bill from Representative Tom Stevens – forthcoming but not many details. Won’t touch Act 250 or municipal zoning.

V. Municipal Round Table

- a. Winooski: Working on standing up their own rental inspection program. Hiring a [Housing Initiatives Director](#) (former Community and Economic Development staff). Also working on renter protections. Received voter-backed petition for “just cause evictions” charter change provisions (very similar to Burlington’s), likely to be introduced in 2024 but may be a statewide discussion.
- b. Winooski Housing Authority: early in conversations with Evernorth to add 10-12 3+ bedroom apartments to existing property on Elm Street.
- c. Williston: Melinda Scott changed from Conservation Planner to Energy and Community Development Planner – now working more in housing. Don’t currently have a housing committee but trying to establish one. Working with CCRPC and VHFA to complete a Housing Needs Assessment as foundation for committee, and to support bylaw amendments. Williston also adopted a form-based code for the Taft Corners area – hope this will spur more development.
- d. South Burlington: working on public outreach for an update to the comprehensive plan (February 2024). City Council discussed regulating short-term rentals and creating a rental registry. \$1mil going to Champlain Housing Trust for three projects: GMHFH partnership to build 18 duplexes behind Dorset Commons; convert Ho-Hum Motel to permanent housing for formerly homeless; and 74 units of mixed-income housing for Summit properties at O’Brien Farm, including formerly homeless units overseen by COTS.

- e. Shelburne: Selectboard voted to remove residential portion of form-based code because it was overly complicated, turned into a complete zoning overhaul. Housing Committee is providing input on residential zoning (focusing on accessory dwellings and duplexes) at February Planning Commission meeting.
- f. Richmond: Housing Committee formed several years ago, housing consultant (Brandy Saxton) has been working on regulatory changes district-by-district (allows for targeted outreach / discussion with neighbors who haven't been interested in multifamily housing). Less pushback in the residential-commercial district. Planning Commission is about to adopt provisions similar to Bongartz bill: 3-4 unit buildings permitted, other similar changes. Doing outreach to convey to community why these changes are important.
- g. Taylor recommended the state's [Enabling Better Places guide](#) as a resource – it was developed with help from the Congress for New Urbanism and is very easy to use.
- h. Jericho: working on educating municipal leaders on housing need in Jericho based on assessment to make the case. Next year will be community outreach similar to Richmond's, piggybacking on Town Plan renewal process. Also reaching out to other municipal boards and committees, particularly Planning Commission on zoning amendments. Want to have conversation in the discussion about housing to head off conflict about development. Also want the Selectboard to adopt 5-10 year targets for housing production, specifically for affordable / missing middle housing (since current development is more high-end). Posted information on accessory dwelling units to website, and working on wastewater feasibility study about where development is feasible.
- i. Hinesburg:
 1. Supporting three major development projects that have affordable components. Cathedral Square doubling Kelly's Field (approved). Haystack Crossing (also approved) has affordable units through inclusionary zoning. Last project (under review) will have 8 units.
 2. Accessory dwelling unit video and forum
 3. Establish a housing trust fund (maybe partially from ARPA)
 4. CCRPC updating the Housing Needs Assessment by June, will help prioritize greatest need types of housing.
 5. Expanded committee back to 9 members, doing education for new members.
- j. Essex Junction: Planning Commission finished significant package of land development code amendments, under review by the City Council (some of which is included in H.68). New housing projects in the pipeline. Thinking about rental registry and inspection program. Cathedral Square renovating Whitcomb Terrace and maybe adding more units.
- k. Essex Town: Joint Housing Commission will be separating this spring, but is still working on two major initiatives to be explored separately by the Town and City.
- l. Burlington: rezoning of Trinity Campus is slowed down because UVM is hesitant to agree to limits on enrollment. South End rezoning would allow for additional development on large expanses of parking. City-wide removal of parking minimums underway; switch to form-based code in Downtown has quickened review process. Looking at technical amendments to inclusionary zoning ordinance to allow for project to have higher SF and more bedrooms of market-rate units as long as % of affordable units is met. Short-term rental registration has generated about \$50,000 for Housing Trust Fund, likely won't stay that high but that's

OK since it will result in more long-term rental housing. Neighborhood Code Initiative to allow for more infill development. Lots more financial support available for COTS project on Main St – actual housing, not just a shelter. Another post-shelter project in partnership with Champlain Housing Trust. Supporting Coordinated Entry System.

Chuck Lacy suggested that the Regional Plan assign each municipality housing targets. Building Homes Together goals weren't strong enough to break exclusionary feeling in Jericho. Targets would help support the conversation better. Taylor noted that this was considered in past regional plans, but was ultimately not adopted due to resistance by municipalities. He also noted that CCRPC is in conversation with VHFA and other housing partners about developing a statewide housing goal, and how that would be broken out among regions and municipalities. Maybe start with a hypothetical framework.

VI. Poll Questions

VII. Other Business

- a. **Topics for future convenings** – Next Convening: tentatively scheduled for July 31, 2023
- b. [VT DHCD Housing Discrimination Survey](#)
- c. **Seven Days final installment of [“Locked Out” special report](#) on housing**