

Minutes of the 8/2/23 meeting of the Harpswell Affordable Housing Working Group

Adopted September 6, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 4:49 pm. Present were Mark Eyerman, Courtenay Snellings, Bob Gaudreau, and Jim Laughren. Four members of the community were also in attendance.

After members introduced themselves, Mark provided a rundown of LD 2003 and the latest state rulings and initiatives that are relevant to Harpswell.

Members again discussed using or discarding the term affordable housing as it has no universal definition and indeed has negative connotations to many. The discussion reiterated the working group's focus on 1) workforce housing, 2) young family housing, and 3) elderly housing. All felt it is important to our identity as a working waterfront community that fishermen, tradespeople and those in local related industries be able to afford housing in Harpswell; that families with children – the future of our community – be able to find and afford housing; and that older Harpswell residents who wish to remain in town have viable mechanisms to do so. There was also some discussion of generational housing, i.e., that people who grew up in Harpswell are able to afford housing and remain in their home town.

The group reviewed the four recently held community "Listening Sessions" as to turnout, feedback, results. Consultant Ivy Vann's summary of the of these sessions was reviewed and discussed. There were questions as to her occasional use of word clouds in lieu of specific numbers for some items, but overall the group felt the results were both insightful and informative. Mark will contact her and ask that she quantify the results where needed before the results are released.

Bob discussed normal economies of scale in housing construction, while agreeing that our situation is more likely to involve identifying "pockets" of buildable land in town. It was agreed that our water restrictions and availability will be foremost in assessing the viability of any building site or sites.

Next on the agenda was preparing for an August 22nd community meeting intended to let residents voice their preferences, ideas, and potential concerns. The committee agreed to restructure the proposed meeting format to more closely align with overall citizen objectives. Mark informed us that the Community School has agreed to be the host location for this assembly; he also agreed to revise the agenda based on today's feedback.

Signage, emails, and other marketing efforts were also discussed for the August 22 meeting.

It was mentioned that our success will be determined by whether or not we can create opportunities that directly address the housing priorities discussed earlier.

Based on a request from Jim, Mark provided maps and the results of past hydrological studies. This led to an in-depth discussion of bedrock aquifers, the type of water source which supplies Harpswell. The major takeaway is that there is not a single large underground pool that town wells draw from. Rather there is an extensive network of vertical fissures such that most wells 1) take years, if not decades to receive surface water, and 2) most individual wells have no or a very localized affect on water quality or quantity.

There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Submitted by Jim Laughren