

Egremont Housing Committee
Minutes: Meeting Monday Oct. 16, 2023

The meeting was on Zoom only.

Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Doug Mishkin at 5:06 PM.

Committee members present on Zoom: Doug Mishkin, Judi Goodman, Richard Allen, Bob Noonan, Elizabeth Keen, Bruce Kafenbaum, Mark Holmes.

Also present were Richard Stanley, James DePisa, Liz Wilson, Lisa Balestro.

Minutes of last meeting on Sept. 18, 2023 were reviewed and unanimously accepted.

Update on Housing Trust

Richard Stanley, chair of the Egremont Housing Trust, updated the committee on the work of the Trust. Their object is to have some housing units built in the next twelve months. The Trust looked at purchasing land in Egremont, but eventually came back to utilizing the six-acre Town Parcel. A large number of housing units would be problematic at this time, so the consensus is that four units would be ideal. That is the number of units that would likely to be acceptable to the neighbors and abutters of the project, and two duplexes is the size that they are going to aim for. Richard Stanley has met with Linda Shafiroff of Creative Building Solutions about getting estimates. The well has been drilled, although the flow is not adequate for four units at this time. The Trust is looking at traditional financing for the project, with 20% down.

He also said they are exploring the possibility of a real estate transfer tax to raise funds for the down payment, and also fund raising. He has spoken to some potential donors among Egremont residents. He said these potential donors would prefer to donate to a specific project, not to a committee.

Richard Allen asked if the units would be rental or purchase. Richard Stanley answered that they will be workforce housing, for rent. He also said that Linda Shafiroff told him that their stick-built houses are competitive with modular.

Bruce Kafenbaum asked who would own and manage the units. Stanley answered that ideally it would not be the Town of Egremont, but an organization like Construct or Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire.

Mark Holmes suggested to Richard Stanley that he also check with The Home Store in Whately MA, who gave the Housing Committee some pricing and designs in 2022 that were competitively priced. Holmes will pass on the contact information to Richard Stanley in the next day or so.

Liz Wilson asked about fracking the well, and Richard Stanley explained the process. Bruce Kafenbaum explained that there will be a minimum of a certain number of gallons per minute of flow, with some storage capacity in the well shaft or casing.

Lisa Balestro, an abutter of the Town parcel, asked about the effect of fracking on their well. She also stated that the neighbors have not accepted any plan that that has been put forth yet.

Doug Mishkin said that any housing development will require approval at Town meeting.

Housing Trust meetings are generally held Thursdays at 8 am.

Update on Community Development Block Grant Program

Mary Brazie has informed the committee that there is a new round of funding for Community Development Block grant proposals which will include funds for improvements. 28 homes in Egremont are on a waiting list. Bruce Kafenbaum thought that the Housing Trust would be the entity to access funds from the Block Grant fund.

Mary McGurn read the definition of Block Grant Program from the Town website page. Dawn Lemmon will be the administrator of Egremont's program.

Update on Transfer Tax

The decision on the transfer tax will be at a future date.

Continued Discussion on Short-Term Rentals:

The committee will hold further discussions on short-term rentals at their next meeting in November in-person at the town hall.

New Business:

Richard Allen suggested that the Housing Committee focus on exploring ADUs in Egremont, and promoting the concept to the Town residents. Doug Mishkin agreed.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Housing Committee will be held on Monday November 20 at 5PM in person at the Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Holmes
Secretary