

RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN WORKFORCE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes
June 22, 2007

In attendance: Bill Barr (Fauquier Affordable Housing), Butch Davies, Norma Dunwody (Culpeper Chamber of Commerce), Andrew Grigsby, Tony Hooper (Fauquier County), Tom Huggard, Jean Kane (Madison County), Alan Knewstep (Rural Development), John Lassiter (Town of Culpeper), Mickey Rhoades (Town of Warrenton), Cathy Zielinski (RRRC)

Mr. Hooper called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm. Introductions were made.

Report on Initial Toolkit Topics – Ms. Zielinski reported that Committee materials have been added to the Regional Commission website's Housing page. The Workforce Housing Toolkit will be a web-based product, also on this website. The toolkit will include demographic information, housing market data, reference links, and in-depth information on specific strategies for local governments to address the workforce housing shortage. The report was supported by a PowerPoint presentation.

A draft of the Toolkit write-up on Accessory Dwelling Units was distributed for discussion on substance as well as an example of the proposed strategy format. The format includes the following sections: subject name, potential benefits, considerations and potential costs, potential barriers, examples and best practices.

There was agreement that the format for presenting the strategy is appropriate. It was suggested that pictures would be valuable and that the web version should include links to exact language from various jurisdictions.

There was discussion about the substance of the Accessory Dwelling Unit explanation and its importance as a workforce housing strategy. Comments included the following:

- Mr. Lassiter reported that the Town of Culpeper passed an ordinance, relaxing restrictions, on this subject at its most recent meeting.
- Any ordinance prohibition on charging rent for the ADU will limit the benefit for affordable housing.
- The distinction between an ADU and a boarding house or an owner-occupied apartment house or multi-family dwelling should be made.
- On larger land parcels, an ADU should not trigger subdivision requirements. Can this be avoided by proximity of ADU to the primary dwelling?
- ADUs are a particularly valuable option for aging population. Many caregivers today don't want just a room, but are looking for their own residence.

- Rental ADUs are also a good option for teachers.

The ADU write up and next two priority strategies will be added to the webpage next week. The next two strategies are Housing Trust Funds and Comprehensive Plan Language. Additional strategies are expected to be added over time.

Local Updates

Mr. Hooper reported on Fauquier County's experience with the proffers on the Willow Creek development. The rezoning was originally approved in Oct. 2005 with proffers for fifteen workforce housing units. In order to qualify for these units, a purchaser was required to have a household income not more than 80 percent of the area median income for a family of four. The developer requested to amend the proffers, dropping the 80 percent income limit, and instead reserving the workforce units for county and school board employees who have been employed with Fauquier County at least three years. If the units cannot be sold to a qualified homeowner, the developer will pay the county \$76,613 for each unit not sold, to support other affordable housing efforts. The Board of Supervisors approved this revision on June 14.

Mr. Hooper also reported that Fauquier County has been awarded \$1 million in SPARC funds from VHDA. SPARC funds (below market rate mortgage money) will be part of a new first-time home buyer program for county and town employees. County-appropriated funds will be used to assist with closing costs and down payments.

Mr. Lassiter reported further on the Town of Culpeper action to approve use of ADUs with a conditional use permit.

Future Meetings and Committee Activity

There was discussion about subjects of interest for future Committee meetings.

- Mixed use development that allows second story residences over commercial property offers potential for affordable housing. Warrenton now allows this. In some areas, these units are high-end, not affordable. In the past there was a conflict with the Main Street program. Historic buildings may be treated differently from other properties. There may be a use for training for planning staff.
- How can we get developers to build smaller houses? Developers seem not to see market for smaller homes but there is belief by some committee members that the demand is there. Now that the sub-prime market is drying up, purchasers are qualifying for less house.
- Identify property that would be suitable for smaller 'starter homes' and find way to ignite this type of development. Get developers involved. The same type of small home may be desirable for empty-nesters. Are there zoning barriers to this type of development?

- The current political atmosphere will present opposition to any type of new residential development. We don't have the local political will to take action. Gridlock in the Town of Culpeper, e.g., is a real problem. The solution to this is a complete vision for housing that excites the public, not the piecemeal action we have had. This belongs in the Comprehensive Plan and will require an educational campaign to demonstrate benefits and needs, e.g., how density in designated areas is necessary to prevent sprawl and preserve agricultural character of the region.

Next meeting will be September 14, 2007 – invite planning directors from Culpeper and Orange Counties for a focused discussion on workforce housing – What provisions have the counties implemented to address this? What if any support is there from the Boards of Supervisors? What could be done? Needs Assessment from Fauquier County will be made available in advance. Caution: keep discussion from shifting to conversation on economic development.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

[Notes prepared by C. Zielinski]