

Planning & Sustainability • City of Northampton

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Housing Partnership
5:30 PM, Monday January 4th,
2021

Zoom Meeting

Members

Rev. Todd Weir, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Edgardo Cancel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hannah Schaffer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gordon Shaw, Vice Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carmen Junno	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	
Richard Abuza	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ace Tayloe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	
Julio Alves	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jim Reis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Staff: Keith Benoit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. Introductions & public comment: No public comments were received.
2. December 7, 2020 Minutes: The Partnership approved unanimously upon motion by Carmen Junno and second by Jim Reis. Passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
3. Ace Tayloe and Hannah Schaffer were recognized as being official members of the Housing Partnership.
4. Todd Weir introduced the Partnership to Grace McCabe from the Central Valley Tenants Union and opened the floor for discussion. Grace McCabe said that the union is a collective was formed in April 2020 during COVID-19 pandemic was picking up. Members are generally Hampshire and some Franklin County residents. Tenants supporting tenants, important for time that we are in. They are not affiliated with other non-profits and are working on eviction defense. People are still receiving notices to quit, even though there is the eviction moratorium. Some people do not have ready access to legal support and knowledge of their rights.
5. Julio Alves asked about the formation of the union, did it come out of pandemic related issues? Grace McCabe was not present at those meetings at the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, but she got involved when her building was purchased. Carmen Junno asked if the union is primarily a clearing house for information? Yes information but also helping people organize tenants. Gordon Shaw asked how they do their outreach or education? Can Community Legal Aid help out in any way. Grace McCabe said they do use social media, flyers (but tricky due to COVID), canvassing (effective despite conditions). They are trying to make it easy to be in contact with the



union. They post on social media to people who are posting about their housing situations. They have had a few pro-bono lawyers.

6. Gordon Shaw recommended “Springfield No One Leaves” as an organization to check out. Jim Reis recommended that the union’s website put out more information on RAFT/ERMA or have Keith Benoit send out information with his email updates. Ace Tayloe said that they saw the union post on Facebook and commended the union for that, affective for their generation. Hannah Schaffer asked how people get involved? Grace McCabe said they have very open meetings and some specific groups. Sara Howard asked if they are pursuing specific ordinances. They are not, but that they have had conversations with a City councilor about certain ordinances to investigate. They are for the Northampton area, so they are not too focused on the City itself. Todd Weir commended the Central Valley Tenants Union for their work and encouraged them to stay in touch with the Housing Partnership.
7. Todd Weir opened the conversation about the Housing Navigator as recommended by the “Unlocking Opportunity: An Assessment of Barriers to Fair Housing in Northampton”. Jim Reis said that the focus groups of the social service agencies said that all the information is fragmented, and information is scattered. With the Resiliency Hub, it would need a full-time staff (case manager) to know and handle all the disparate information, assistance, or connections. The case manager cannot be someone who is overworked or has another job. The position needs to be funded and knowledgeable about this. Todd Weir asked about the proposal and the writing of the grant. Keith Benoit gave an update on the process for the Resiliency Hub and will keep the partnership updated. Gordon Shaw said that it not just about getting housing, but income maximization, CORI records, or spotty tenancies.
8. Todd Weir said that the Housing Navigator need a job description and asked if anyone in the partnership wanted to draft that up. Ace Tayloe said that maybe the position is someone who coordinates volunteers. It is too much work for one person. Gordon Shaw said that there is a lot of information out there, the private marketplace seems to regulate itself. It is tough work and can deal with the legal challenges when housing is challenged. Jim Reis agreed that there needs to follow through. If there is a high case load, then you are only doing one-on-one case management. At Way Finders, they were able to have one person dedicated to housing information, so that case managers can focus on case management. Carmen Junno asked if it is the partnership’s job to create a job description? Julio Alves asked if anyone knows where all the affordable housing is. A list somewhere? Gordon Shaw said the Chapter 40B list would have the list and that the City just needs to be made public. Keith Benoit has that list and can send it out.
9. Sara Howard said that when she did case management that it was difficult to keep track of all the information. She sees the value in having on person like a housing navigator that knows everything. Todd Weir asked who is going to drive this (creating job description) and what our next steps. There are several people who are interested. Jim Reis will lead the subcommittee. Jim Reis gave some clarification on site plan review.

10. Gordon Shaw mentioned that we are still waiting on response back from Mayor and the Housing Authority.
11. Next meeting: Ace Tayloe asked about the removing broker fees for next meeting. Todd Weir asked if sending a follow up email (from Todd Weir) made sense to mayor and commended their work from the Mayor's Office in getting shelter open. Jim Reis said that March maybe a better month, so the partnership can get thoughts together. Ace Tayloe said that this proposal has already been pushed back before and that they want to definitely see it on the March calendar. Julio Alves said that the Mayor may not agree, so getting all the preparation involved in the meeting would be best. Todd Weir said that we may only get the mayor at a meeting only once every 12-18 months.
12. Hannah Schaffer asked what it looks like to write a letter to the newspaper. Sara Howard said that the City council is the one that will pass the ordinance and that all the research has been done for this. Richard Abuza said that he would like to be as prepared as possible.
13. The Housing Partnership adjourned unanimously at 7:00 from a motion by Ace Tayloe and seconded by Carmen Junno.