

Shaftsbury Planning Commission

February 8, 2022

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:03 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Mike Foley, Naomi Miller, Martha Cornwell, and Erin Cross. Also present was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles. Mr. Williams welcomed Ms. Cross to the Commission.

Minutes

Ms. Miller moved to approve the January 11 minutes. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1 (with Ms. Cross abstaining).

Accessory dwelling units/Affordable housing

Mr. Foley said it might be best to focus our efforts on areas where additional housing could more likely be constructed. Ms. Miller asked if the issue is “housing” or “affordable housing?” Ms. Cornwell thought the answer was “housing,” but that by focusing on ADUs, the discussion would necessarily focus on affordable units.

Mr. Williams moved to resolve a contradiction in the bylaw by putting before the voters at March 2023 Town meeting the following language:

“An efficiency or one bedroom Dwelling Unit located within or appurtenant to an owner occupied One Family Dwelling that is clearly subordinate to the One Family Dwelling, which has provisions for independent living, including sleeping, food preparation, and sanitation, provided that the property has sufficient wastewater capacity and that the unit does not exceed ~~30~~ 50 percent of the total habitable floor area of the One Family Dwelling, but is at least 400 square feet in floor area. Larger existing structures such as barns or carriage houses may be renovated for this purpose but the Dwelling Unit shall comply with the 50 percent threshold.”

Ms. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1 (Ms. Cross abstained).

Just what is the problem?

Ms. Miller said the State seems to believe that VT needs an increase in housing that can accommodate young families and working people, and wants to focus on creating that housing in downtowns to avoid fragmenting forests.

Mr. Williams said housing is perhaps a second tier problem, as no one wants to move here because there are no good jobs.

Ms. Cross said it is too expensive to live here. She made more money when she was nineteen working for Stanley Tools than she makes now. She said you have to be very self-motivated to make ends meet now.

Ms. Cornwell said her education is at the doctoral level and she can’t afford a house in town. She said the divide between the haves and have-nots has greatly increased over the last thirty years. She said she wants to promote work force housing, fair wages, and good internet. Aren’t there existing structures where housing can be built for teachers? First responders? There are more than 300 AirBnB sites in Shaftsbury; a lot of housing is going to people from away, not from here.

The discussion was tabled to the next meeting.

Paramilitary training facilities

It was agreed that all necessary actions regarding this topic have been taken at this time. The next trigger for review will be end of the legislative session and final disposal of Sen. Baruth’s bill on this matter.

Other business

Mr. Foley will serve another term. He will write a letter to the Select Board requesting reappointment.

Ms. Stiles will revisit the minutes to consolidate a list of any tasks yet to be completed.
The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.