

# St Johnsbury Housing “Task Force or Work Group”

October 8, 2021

*Introduction: This is our first meeting after agreeing to a reorganization of this group. We recognized that the optics and possible conflict of interest in having Joe Kasprzak, a town official, as the convener of this open citizen group was probably not in the best interest of this town or this committee. At our last meeting, we discussed what this group should be called. We are not technically a town committee, but are we a task force, work group, or ad hoc? We did not decide.*

*What we did decide was that Joe Kasprzak would remain on the group as an advisor and liaison to the town of St Johnsbury. Susan Cherry agreed to be the convener and Pam Dearborn agreed to take the minutes.*

Minutes of October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting:

Present via Zoom: Susan Cherry, Patricia Janssen, Patrick Shattuck, Ron Steen, Alice Kitchel, Pam Dearborn

- ❖ We opened the meeting with a check in of how things were going. People were experiencing highs and lows but the worker shortage was a common theme.
- ❖ Town Web site
  - Joe is working on reorganizing the town website to separate official town business from other committees and items of interest
  - We are supposed to be able to find the agendas and minutes from our meetings on the website, but Susan was unable to locate them.
- ❖ Code Compliance update
  - We have 1,289 rental units in St Johnsbury
    - So far 80% of them have registered FY 21-22
    - We have collected \$33,705 so far out of the \$42,000 that we expect
  - The Fire Department is still working on the first round of inspections

- They have had a leadership change with an interim fire chief who does not do the inspections
  - Andrew Buckley left and a new compliance officer will be starting next month

#### ❖ RHIG

- On September 13<sup>th</sup>, Joe and PJ attended the Select Board meeting to have our committee's requests reapproved for this fiscal year
  - The Select Board voted to reapprove current guidelines
  - The same 5 will continue on the review committee until May of 2022
    - Patricia Janssen
    - Irene Nagle
    - Alice Kitchel
    - Ron Steen
    - Joe Kasprzak
  - Next meeting will be October 27<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am
  - Round 2 of the grant process closes October 31<sup>st</sup>
  - The grantees will be announced on December 1<sup>st</sup>
  - There will be a series of 6 ads in the Caledonian Record
  - Round 1 Grantees are still having trouble finding contractors to complete their projects, so the deadline for completion has been extended to April 2022
  - The Advisory group to assist applicants should not be the same people as the review committee
    - Alicia Armstrong has agreed to serve as an advisor

#### ❖ Community Conversation is being planned for November 2, 2021 at 6pm via Zoom

- The topic will be re: a warming shelter – or the lack of one
- Jenna O'Farrell and Joy Ely, Patrick Shattuck, Susan Cherry and Suzanne Legare Belcher are planning this
- Rick D'Angelis will be facilitating the conversation as a neutral – non-resident of St J
- The goal is to approach this topic gently – and address town fears

#### ❖ Landlord Information Exchange

- Last meeting was held in September – there was a small turnout
- Next meeting will be January 17<sup>th</sup>
  - Would like to engage more landlords to attend
  - What would be good information for this group?
- ❖ Downtown tax credits highlighted by a visit from Gov Scott to St Johnsbury
  - \$550K to 4 businesses
    - Fairbanks Museum
    - MSI / 67 Eastern Avenue
    - Kingdom Animal Hospital
    - Zion Growers for the Ide building
  - St Johnsbury has also received \$1.5 million to complete the LMRT to downtown St J
- ❖ Next meeting November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021