



Long Term and Transitional Housing Task Force

Minutes of Meeting via Zoom

23rd February 2021 starting at 10.00 am

Present on Line: Diane Arsenijevic; Barry Fellingner; Sara Knight; David James; Jim Patterson; Ruleen Lilley; Linda Long; Henry Dryfhout; Linda Funk; Danielle Neilson (joined at 10.30)

Minutes recorded by David James. I have incorporated responses from Danielle received Feb 26th to some of the questions raised during the meeting.

Diane requested members present please introduce themselves to the group.

Request for someone to be chair of this task Force. David James volunteered.

David briefed the meeting about the letter of 25 January (copies were distributed) It outlined the need for a consultant study to define housing needs in our rural municipalities as well as potential properties where geared to income housing could be built. Without this information we are not likely to be able to access grant monies from senior government. (From Danielle: Neil Watson is consultant for St. Thomas. He recommends Tim Welch as a potential consultant for us)

There was discussion about cost and timing of a study, and the need for our two municipalities to be on board. Linda Noted this is a social issue, not a housing issue. The municipal Councils must have that mindset. It was noted that St. Thomas has projects started. Can we learn from what they did?

Municipalities are required by the Provincial Government to have a 10 year housing plan. One was done for the City of St. Thomas and Elgin County in 2012. It must be updated no later than 2022. Comment from Danielle "It is quite out of date". A study entitled "The St. Thomas Elgin Affordable and Social Housing Strategy" was completed in 2018. It is available on line. (Danielle provided a link in her follow up email to the Task Force.)

Barry noted that there is diminishing rental housing stock across the country, not just in our area. The problem is going to get worse.

Danielle discussed the process for accessing Federal or Provincial Funds for affordable housing:

1. The time frame to respond is usually very short, so we must have projects identified and ready to go to stand any chance of accessing funding.
2. The first steps are to identify potential sites, make sure zoning is in place (or initiate a rezoning) and make sure servicing is available. It is important to have a social safety net in place for tenants of social housing.
3. Confirm there is a defined need for the housing. Danielle noted that in major cities the need is so great defining need is not necessary. In rural areas the need is less clear and needs to be established. The wait time for social housing is a good indicator. In West Lorne it is currently 2 to 3 years. In Rodney it is 1 to 2 years. (In St. Thomas it is approaching 10 years)

Danielle commented on Funding for studies. Grant money usually comes with an administration component. This can be used to pay a consultant. She said there is a whole smorgasbord of funding possibilities, and someone like Neil Watson could give good advice.

Discussion around the update of the 10 year housing plan for St. Thomas. It included Elgin County. Better chance of moving forward if we suggest an update of the plan for the County, rather than a stand-alone study for our two municipalities. Danielle will explore this possibility with her supervisor. David noted time is of the essence, and we would like the study update to start yesterday. Updating the plan for the whole county will not preclude our local municipalities from applying for specific projects here.

Discussion regarding who owns and operates a geared to income housing project. Danielle said it varies and may depend on who provided the capital funding.

It would be useful to have names of contact persons at Indwell and Habitat for Humanity. Jim will get contact info for Habitat and Danielle for Indwell.

Action

A brief discussion was held around the need for transitional housing. It will be essential to identify possible sites and defining the need. Jim mentioned the trailers that are used for housing workers in the oil and gas fields in Northern Alberta. There may be some available because of the downturn in exploration. **Transitional housing to be an agenda item for our next meeting. Bring your ideas!!**

Diane reminded the meeting we are to populate a work plan. It will be a living document that gets updated and revised at each meeting.

Initial action items:

1. Discussions with County about updating 10 year housing study.
2. Review 2018 Housing Study for relevance to our needs.
3. Make initial contact with Indwell and Habitat to see if they will assist us.
4. Contact Lindsay Rice who is working on the Tiny Homes project in St. Thomas to see if she will join our next meeting to inform us on the project.

5. Confirm with our two municipalities that they agree with the approach we are suggesting. (Through our two municipal councilors on the committee.)
6. Prepare for further discussions on transitional housing.

Next Meeting:

Monday 8th March at 10.30 am.