

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
INCLUSION COMMITTEE**

Monday, April 24, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Selectboard Hall

96 Main Street – Third Floor

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:08 with Sue Dowdell, pattrice jones, Walter Martone, and Dan Bannan present in person. By 5:25, Charis Boke had joined by Zoom and Char Osterland had joined in person. Not present: Brandon Gulnick and Crystal Stevens.

2. Q&A with Town Planner & Zoning Administrator

Chuck Wise shared information with the committee concerning the current status of the town landlord registry as well as other options for identifying landlords for the purpose of distributing fair housing information to them and their tenants: While Sec. 18-114 does require annual registration, the registry is “defunct” and it is “not the immediate priority” of the planning and zoning department to resume collecting the information needed to identify rental properties in town. CAI property cards held by the assessment department represent an alternative method of finding and collating some of this information. The state’s Lead Poisoning Prevention department may be a source of data as well as a possible model for information distribution. Legislation mandating rental housing registration at the state level has been proposed but is currently stalled and is opposed by Governor Scott.

Chuck answered follow-up questions from committee members: The forms for registration still exist. It would be possible to advertise the requirement on the town website and through other means and begin accepting those forms again, and doing so would not be unduly burdensome. However, Chuck believes that only the most compliant landlords would be responsive and that those most in need of fair housing information would be least likely to comply without enforcement, which would be burdensome. While it might take as much as 60 hours of labor to pull detailed information (such as number of units) from the lister cards, gleaning only names and addresses of landlords might take as little as 10 hours. Chuck believes the state’s Lead Poisoning Prevention to be the best potential source of the data sought.

Dan provided Chuck with an overview of zoning-related concerns that arose at the committee’s April 21st information-gathering meeting, with particular attention to requirements that make development of affordable housing more difficult.

The chair invited Chuck to share with the committee any ideas for planning/zoning changes that might make the town more inclusive. The committee thanked Chuck for his time.

3. Additions / subtractions to agenda

Items 6.e. and 7.c. below were added. Item 8.b.i. was struck as outdated and item 8.b.ii. was postponed until an update is available.

4. Public Comment—*None.*

5. Approval of Minutes of February 15 and March 29 meetings

February 15 minutes: Sue asked for one wording error and one capitalization error to be fixed; Sue moved for minutes to be accepted as amended; Walter seconded; motion passed unanimously.

March 29 minutes: No changes; Sue motioned for minutes to be accepted; Char seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Sue reminded all note-takers of the obligation to submit final versions of minutes to Brian after they are approved, so that these can be substituted for draft versions initially published on the town website.

6. Post-Town-Meeting-Day reorganization and assessment

a. Election of chair

Sue moved that pattrice remain as chair; Charis seconded; motion passed unanimously.

b. Election of vice-chair

pattrice moved that Char become vice-chair; Charis seconded; motion passed unanimously.

c. Election of secretary or affirmation of alternative note-taking praxis

Charis moved that rotating note-taking continue; Char seconded; motion passed unanimously.

d. Affirmation of 4th Tuesdays as new regular meeting date

All agreed that this date will be the usual meeting date going forward with exceptions to be made as needed. 5:30 PM will continue to be the time. Usual meeting place will be the library.

e. Leave of absence for committee member

Charis will be stepping away from the committee through the summer and asked whether the committee would prefer her to resign and then ask for reappointment. All were comfortable with her taking a leave of absence. In order to ensure quorum, chair will invite the member who has not attended recently to formally resign and all will seek someone to fill the current vacancy and the additional vacancy that will exist if that member resigns.

f. Assessment of work so far—*Postponed until next meeting*

g. Identification of foci for coming year—*Postponed until next meeting*

7. New Business

- a. Review of April 21 housing meeting
 - i. Discussion of results and next steps

The information-gathering and idea-generating meeting concerning housing organized by Charis, Dan, and Walter on behalf of the committee was held on April 21, with 21 people in attendance. Attendees were diverse in terms of age and included both housing experts and people struggling with housing insecurity. Using the “open space” meeting format, attendees identified topics of interest and then split into groups to discuss four areas: (1) data; (2) transitional and senior housing; (3) town strategic plan; (4) zoning.

Attendees reported feeling “empowered” and “heard” due to the meeting format. Charis appreciated the cooperative “vibe” as well as the inter-generational character of the session. One library staff member who attended reported to Sue that they felt the meeting had been “extremely beneficial.”

Next steps: Since the question of zoning requirements arose at the meeting and since zoning can function either as an impediment to or facilitator of fair housing, the committee will assess current zoning practices through an inclusion lens. Since the strategic plan also arose and will soon be revised, the committee will endeavor to ensure that the expertise in evidence at the meeting is available to the Selectboard in the course of their decision-making. In service of the latter aim, Walter will ensure that Laura Ryan at the Springfield Housing Authority and other relevant experts are aware of when the Selectboard will be meeting to revise the strategic plan.

- ii. Reconsideration of recommendation for a housing committee

In lieu of recommending a new housing committee, the inclusion committee will recommend to the Select Board that they consider including a housing advisory committee to the strategic plan.

- b. Information received concerning inclusion training for town employees
 - i. Police Department—*Postponed until next meeting*
 - ii. Fire Department—*Postponed until next meeting*
 - iii. Other Departments—*Postponed until next meeting*
- c. Update on “Belonging Day” event

The committee has been invited to participate in the May “Belonging Day” event for youth organized by the self-constituted Equity Committee of educators who work within the local school district. Char and Sue will work together to prepare a handout about the committee and its

work so far to bring to the event, at which it may be possible to hear from youth about their concerns and also may be possible to locate additional committee members.

8. Old Business

a. Equity Screening Tool

All agreed that Char and Charis have made great strides in converting the extensive policy-assessment process envisioned by Jules into a more lightweight tool to be shared with town staff. In advance of the next meeting, patrice will prepare a more polished version for the full committee to formally consider adopting.

b. Ongoing Housing-Related Work

- i. ~~Upcoming information-gathering event~~
- ii. Housing information repository at STL—*No new information*

9. Potential Recommendations to Selectboard

See 7.a.ii. above. Walter will convey that recommendation to the rest of the Selectboard

10. Set date of next regular meeting: May 23, 2023, at 5:30 PM at the library.

11. Adjournment

Caris motioned to adjourn; Char seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by patrice jones on 25 April 2023.