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*By Linda Amerighi at 10:18 am, Jan 05, 2022*

MINUTES

Sharon Housing Plan Steering Committee

1/3/2022

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 and held via “Zoom” by Planning consultant Jocelyn Ayer. Attending were Selectman Dale Jones, Planning and Zoning member Larry Moskowitz, Sharon Housing Authority treasurer Pat Whalen, and Habitat for Humanity NWCT Executive Director Bob Whelan.

Members shared their views on the Town Housing Survey prepared by Ayer, and everyone agreed that the survey, which will be primarily online by “Survey Monkey” was an appropriate length, and needed only minor modifications. Moskowitz asked why some questions had circles for the multiple-choice answers, and other had squares. Ayer explained that circles were used for questions requiring a single answer, while squares were used for questions where multiple answers could apply.

Larry and Pat Whelan support asking whether respondents would like to see town taxpayer funds for affordable housing should be added to the survey. Draft language might be; *“Should the Town of Sharon provide funding in the municipal budget to assist with affordable housing efforts, as other Northwest Connecticut communities have done?”*

Bob Whalen suggested the survey might ask whether employment opportunities in town are a barrier to home ownership and affordable rents. Larry asked whether a question about whether rental units are handicapped accessible might be useful. Ayer said she’d look at wording for that question. Members agreed that survey question Number 22 about working from home would add the word “remote” which has been commonly used in the Covid era.

Following final language adjustments, the survey will launch in a number of ways, with links on the Sharon Town website, on the monthly emailed newsletter, on the town Facebook page, and through the Constant Contact list. Dale Jones said he would pursue those paths to getting the survey out. Additionally, Ayer will prepare a press release to be shared with the Republican American, and Lakeville Journal Newspapers. An interview with radio station WHDD, Robin Hood Radio will also be pursued.

Moskowitz asked about preventing repeat surveys from the same household, and Ayer said Survey Monkey has settings to prevent that. Ayer said she would print some paper surveys to have available at town hall, and perhaps the Hotchkiss Library, but added that returns of paper surveys are typically quite low. It is hoped the Committee will get a good return by the next meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Moving on, the committee set a date of February 24<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. for a public forum on affordable housing in Sharon. The forum will be done via Zoom. Jocelyn Ayer will work on slides and presentation material for the forum. She will share drafts with the committee members.

Members then turned their attention to a second electronic survey aimed at people who work in Sharon. They reviewed a short, 8-question survey that will be adjusted for Sharon. It is hoped employers in Sharon will share the survey with their employees, for additional information on the challenges local workers face trying to find places they can afford in town. Larry Moskowitz said he’d work to get the survey shared at Sharon Hospital, and Pat Whalen said she’d make inquiries at Sharon center school.

A motion to adjourn was made by Larry Moskowitz, seconded by Pat Whalen, and the meeting adjourned at 6:32

Submitted,

Dale Jones acting Secretary