

Minutes April 13, 2009

Present:

Alan Croteau

Bernie Folta

Scott Pope

Jack O'Sullivan

Jacqui Guilette

The meeting started at 7:30 a.m. One member was not present due to an emergency family illness.

Progress on the re-write "seed draft" of the housing chapter is moving along, but time issues with unforeseen family illness and work situations has prevented completion. The three members who will write this will bring this forward when possible, looking at an end of summer or mid to late fall completion date. It was mentioned that the data will be comprised and gathered from several sources, including a housing area study chart, power school housing locations and densities of school aged children, planning department information, common thread research from previous meetings with the public, and other data sources to be determined and found. The idea of quality and completeness was discussed and all agreed this was the main goal in this process.

This said, the initial idea presented in January for the "Housing chapter" will be put aside, and a new version that has a stronger data base will be brought forward. The new document will receive full committee attention and review and will once again go through the public forum process as done for previously approved chapters.

New data regarding the current housing market was brought forward by Jack O'Sullivan. The current housing situation stands as follows: 159 home units were for sale at the highest point during the past year, the current market has 116 homes for sale. The average is between 195 and 205 days on the market. Two new homes came onto the market in the past week, and he has had three sales closed upon in the past week.

Two inhibitants are mentioned by buyers, the tax rate and quality of housing available. One member questioned if our city location could also be an inhibitant, but it was mentioned we are very close to I-91, which could be beneficial. The only other city very close by this close to I-91 is Windsor, and many of the same problems face that community in perception.

Mr. Tinker cautioned towards always looking at the average assessed value of a home versus the tax rate when looking at high tax rate as a detriment, and how homes in this area have lower value but larger size. None the less, many members of the committee felt the tax rate as a single number listed on a chart was still an issue to overcome.

Middle class housing was brought up as an issue. Working towards a community that has opportunities for the families that are up and coming while also allowing opportunities for

quality housing (purchases) when families downsize after the family “leaves the nest”, or retires and wishes to stay in the community.

Mr. Folta brought up the “Work force Housing” issues and the necessity for the city to remain in compliance with the law. He also handed out information for the committee to review, which was accepted for future data review. He noted that the city needs to assure continual with HUD and workforce housing.

Mr. Croteau suggested that a “loosening of the codes (building) could be done for people in some situations who wish to build homes. When questioned, he stated this did NOT mean creating substandard housing, but rather allowing for a home owner to work on a home (renovations) in a planned manner to meet building codes in an affordable and timely manner that encourages renovation and rehabilitation.

The committee requested the copies of the original “Housing Break-out group” easel charts from the very first Master Plan Community Roundtable for future review so that common threads could be re-established. This request will be filled by Mr. Tinker at a future meeting.

Bernie Folta mentioned how this process must have continual oversight by the community and members. The committee agreed, and when a draft is completed, it will be posted on the city web site, and given out in many ways for people to look over, ending up at a public forum for further revision. He also noted that the recent headlines in the Claremont newspaper regarding the housing ordinances shows that Claremont is having spirited discussion about this topic, and it was agreed this is good.

It was also noted that a city budget shortfall will cause issues with research and printing in the future, as well as having surveys. One suggestion given was using “Survey Monkey”, but this would have to be researched further. Other issues regarding budget shortfalls in regard to the Master Plan Process have yet to be determined at this point as well.