

Dryden Affordable and Workforce Housing Committee
***DRAFT* Minutes for March 6, 2024 Meeting Via Zoom**



*Making Dryden hospitable & affordable
for working families*

Attendance: Martha Robertson; Ray Burger; Craig Anderson; Dillon Shults, Christina Dravis, Mike Murphy, Chuck Geisler; Greg Mezey joined as guest and Miles McCarty could not attend.

Note: *next meeting is on April 10, (2 pm) or possibly sooner.*

Agenda:

1. February minutes approval
2. Update and discussion on the evolving potential project with CCED. Chuck, Ray and Dillon (10-15 min)
3. Introduction of Greg Mezey and his work in the TC housing development committee. Greg (10 min).
4. Timing and details on Thoma \$500,000 CDBG contract with the village of Dryden (Ray and Dillon) (5-10 min).
5. Pro-Housing proposal from Town (Dillon and Ray) (5 min)
6. Status of town zoning review (Craig and Ray) (10 min)
7. Tim Crilly - development in the Village by Park Grove (Martha) (10 min)
8. Albany social housing legislation: should town or our committee show support (<https://portside.org/2024-02-27/public-ownership-housing-could-be-closer-you-think/>)? (All?). (10 min)

Meeting:

1. **Minutes approved.** Some corrections needed.
2. **CCE Update on MH Weatherization Pilot in Dryden:**

A summary of the proposed Dryden weatherization of mobile homes in conjunction with CCE is in Feb. minutes. Chuck, Leonardo, Ray, and Dillon have met with CCE staff and tentatively agreed on a joint weatherization effort using Empower+ funds contracted to CCE from NYSERDA. This initiative replaces our earlier interest in mobile home replacement – a strategy which reaches fewer LMI households.

If CCE/Clean Energy HUB funds become available to town, Dryden could hire a project manager to assist with mobile home outreach and referrals. Discussion followed as to where this employee would be best housed (Dryden Planning Office, INHS, Sustainable Finger Lakes). Martha had a conversation with Gay Nicholson to learn about their program to support electrification of rental units in the Town of Ithaca. One possibility could be funding Holly Hutchinson to work halftime on Dryden mobile home weatherization. Ray will communicate with INHS on the same topic; we hope to have confirmation of the position from CCE and office location for the hire by our April meeting. Ideally, the pilot would begin referrals and engage contractors by late spring or midsummer. Mike and Martha expressed skepticism as to the starting date, the adequacy of position funding, and the logic of basing the personnel in Dryden given that other entities are “in business” to do this work.

Chuck clarified that we are not replicating what other groups are doing. SFLX’s MH pilot is devoted to heat pump and electric panel upgrades, not weatherization. INHS does a spectrum of mobile home rehabilitation, replacement, and electrification and might be interested in subsuming our pilot, given other collaborations it has with the village and town of Dryden. Does INHS have a license to do this kind of work on mobile homes? Probably yes, since they own Compass MHP. Leonardo supports the weatherization pilot so long as it promotes Dryden MH needs.

ACTION ITEMS:

Follow up with INHS (Ray & Dillon)	Follow
up with Karim (Chuck & Leonardo)	

3. Greg Mezey introduction and interests

Greg chairs the county’s Housing and Economic Development Committee and is on the Planning, Energy, & Environmental Quality Committee. He wants to see what our Dryden committee is working on and invited us to speak at one of his committee meetings when/if appropriate. Housing is a critical issue locally, regionally and nationally. Building supplies are not keeping up with housing demand, rents are widely unaffordable, and homelessness is on the rise. His Housing committee has been tasked with addressing the county’s unhoused population as well.

Greg is on the IAED Board and communicates regularly with Heather McDaniel and Jennifer Tavares (Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce). Bold housing solutions needed from all quarters. He would like to attend our meetings in the future. Martha asked him about progress on the idea for a low barrier shelter in Tompkins County. It may contain 100 beds. The county gets state funds for such sheltering if people meet restrictions. The new shelter proposal is a short-term housing solution. It can be a referral point to other services. Operating expenses are \$1 million-\$2

million/year depending on weather, rent fluctuations, evictions, and the side-effects of changing federal policies/ subsidies. Greg believes support is growing amongst county legislators.

St. John's now runs a 12-bed shelter for the county; 77 additional beds exist at EconoLodge. Other hotels are used under DSS guidance. State aid may be available for infrastructure. Changes in state rules for daily reimbursement are needed. County can't rely on state, still at ~\$400 per person per month--insufficient.

Pro-Housing communities: Greg congratulated Dryden Village for applying successfully. More money may come to such communities; he is meeting with his County committee to better understand Pro-Housing status as a requirement for housing assistance. He stressed that affordable housing is a development issue and has numerous indirect benefits (crime reduction, health, expanded tax base, energy efficiency, reduced green house gases, etc.).

4. **Thoma project in Village**

Look for a public launch meeting soon. Thoma is doing a public handout and information will appear on the village website. Town CDBG grant is for \$500,000, out of which \$85-\$90,000 is for advertising and managing the project. Energy rehab work will extend to 14 to 16 homes. (~\$30,000 each). Ray expects to have 35 to 40 applicants by June. *[am I wrongly conflating town and village here? CG] [MR – No, I think you have it right, Chuck.]*

5. **Pro—Housing Designation for Town**

Still emerging. Unclear if housing related, grant programs will be tied to the designation. Dillon is completing the application for the town. Immediate concern is zoning, then building permit analysis. More data needed. If Dillon can't gather this, town board can pass a "pro-housing" resolution following the village example. Mike suggests he speak with Heather McDaniel at IAED, as she's offered to help with applications. The state provides a model resolution which town could use. Mike expresses appreciation for support of the village and directed thanks to Craig and Martha for specific and sustained help.

ACTION ITEMS: Complete and submit Pro-housing application to state or prepare resolution for Town Board to adopt (Dillon)

6. **Zoning Review**

Mandated in 2022 Comprehensive Plan. Two stages: first will be an audit of town's zoning law based on interviews. Recommendations for zoning amendments and modifications follow. Will be done by (Liz ___?___), just hired from candidate pool as

Community Planning Development Associate. Plan is to complete review by August. Craig: our committee still needs to come up with list of zoning priorities.

ACTION ITEM: complete our list of zoning priorities (all)

7. Park Grove Development (1061 Dryden Rd.)

A 36 unit/108 bedroom townhouse plan was approved in 2017 as a PUD, with revisions in 2018 that reduced the size of some units and the bedroom count to 90. Negligible revisions occurred since. Approved by TB in 2022 under name of “Evergreen Townhouses” [?]-the latest in a list of Park Grove projects in Tompkins Co. They hope to finish project this fall.

Will the new Park Grove units have heat pumps? Ray says that in the last decade almost all new multi-family housing in Dryden has been all electric, meaning no new gas lines in the town or village. Chuck points to Freeville and Bruno Schickel’s new housing cluster there--might not install heat pumps. Town has no say over Freeville permits. Agreement that it’s better to talk with developers early about incentives and benefits of electrification, as Mike did with Rocco Lucente in Ezra Village.

According to Martha, based on call to Park Grove’s Tim Crilly about the former DOT parcel in the Village, the developer is still in very early stages. Martha reached out to HCR as well; HCR has a grant program that might encourage Park Grove to do for-sale units instead of rentals (for 80 to 100% AMI). Martha will follow up with Park Grove.

8. Social housing as a new real estate model

Chuck circulated article (above). Quote: “In early February, NYS Assembly member Emily Gallagher and State Sen. Cordell Cleare introduced a bill to create the Social Housing Development Authority. This proposed agency would be tasked with developing permanently affordable, union-built social housing, which would be owned by the public — not private developers.” Could we write to state lawmakers to support this legislation? Leonardo says social housing is a big deal in Chile and Europe. We’re not clear on exactly how it works and where the funding comes from—bonds, taxes, rents, government subsidies, etc. Committee interested in learning more.

ACTION ITEM: send articles to Greg and county staff (Chuck)

9. Ezra Village update

Mike says start date is this summer. Still working on sewer and water plan and dealing with DOT permit problem on Rte. 13. Craig and the North Street Committee

he chairs have done heavy lifting here. He urges patience with developers faced with high interest rates that still delay their projects, including Ezra Village.

Minutes transcribed by Chuck from Martha's notes. Corrections & edits welcome.