

SALISBURY AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING – SUBCOMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 2, 2023 – 11:00AM (VIA ZOOM)

A Conversation about Fundraising for Affordable Housing

Present: Mary Close Oppenheimer (Subcommittee Chair), Jon Higgins, Jim Dresser, Lee Sullivan and SAHC members Abeth Slotnick and Jennifer Kronholm Clark. In attendance: Bob Whelan, Felicia Jones, Jocelyn Ayer, Dawn Whalen, Lindsay Larson, Leo Gafney and George Massey.

M. Close Oppenheimer introduced Jocelyn Ayer, Salisbury Housing Committee (SHC) and Director of Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity, and asked her to give advice regarding fundraising challenges.

Ms. Ayer commented that Salisbury is doing a lot of projects, which raises concern about getting funding. She talked about the Center for Housing Opportunity which has resources for supporting specific projects. They have agreements with the Salisbury Housing Committee and Salisbury Housing Trust (SHT), regarding project development. She noted that 3 projects have been awarded some pre-development funding: the Falls Village Housing Trust; East Railroad Street; and the Morris Housing Authority Project.

The Mini-Grant Program for Community Engagement is available again in 2023. She pointed out that Salisbury needs to update the 2018 Housing Plan this year; she is willing to help with the update. She suggested creating projects that are competitive for State and Federal funding, to keep working with David Berto and be patient. She also suggested communicating with the public about progress being made; the new SAHC communications plan is helpful. L. Sullivan pointed out that the SAHC has a monthly newsletter, as well as the Town of Salisbury. Ms. Ayer talked about the SHC and SHT needing to hire a staff person to do fundraising, as the non-profits are all volunteers without support structure. She continued that fundraising is needed for acquisition; pre-development; construction/renovation; capital needs/repairs; operations. She commented that better local fundraising strategies are needed and offered 5 ideas: enable online donations; annual events; relationships with others, like Salisbury Family Services; local banks; Town Affordable Housing Fund; and considering a conveyance fee approach as a possible way to get more money into the AH fund.

Felicia Jones, from Falls Village, talked about what the fund-raising issues are and what you are raising funds for; she mentioned a “matching campaign.” She suggested a website called NonprofitReady.org to get free ideas. She offered some fundraising ideas such as: Municipal support (ARPA funds & annual budget contributions); Community re-investments (partners, banks, local foundations); Community events to turn fundraising into fun. She suggested being “grant-ready” with required documents.

J. Dresser asked about public financing available beyond local private donations; Ms. Ayer responded that she and David Berto are looking at other resources. J. Higgins suggested that more money should go into the AH Fund from the Town budget; he noted that even if the amount allowed by the Town

Ordinance is raised, Board of Selectmen approval would still be needed. There was further discussion about getting more Town support and it was mentioned that specific projects do better. M. Close Oppenheimer asked if there is a list of groups to contact; Ms. Ayer answered that no list is available as the SHC and SHT have to maintain their relationships. J. Dresser suggested that this subcommittee should find out about larger funding resources and would like more money in the Town budget for AH. Ms. Ayer mentioned that they are not missing anything regarding big funds and suggested that this subcommittee work on getting more money into the AH fund. She also suggested that more towns apply for "small cities' (CDBG) funds; maybe Salisbury could apply for East Rail Road Street. As far as competitive projects, she noted that nothing in Litchfield County was funded. Her suggestions were to build up the AH fund, make it more accessible and work with Dawn Whalen on Best Practices ways of doing fundraising.

M. Close Oppenheimer thanked Ms. Ayer and all for attending.