

Approved as written

Jamestown Affordable Housing Committee Minutes

July 17, 2024 at 5:15pm

Small Conference Room

93 Narragansett Avenue, Jamestown, RI 02835

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m. The following members were present: Bob Plain, Lisa Bryer, and Susan Gorelick, Fred Pease and Job Toll, Quaker Case, Not present: Wayne Moore and Dave Pritchard, Mary Meagher, Also present: Carrie Kolb, Nikki Vazquez, Executive Director of Jamestown Housing Authority

II. Approval of Minutes

a. June 26, 2024 - review, discussion and/or action and/or vote

A motion was moved by Pease and seconded by Gorelick to approve the minutes from June 26, 2024, as amended. The correction to the minutes removed the word “pilot” from the motion on page 2 paragraph 1. All in favor.

III. Public Comment

Nikki Vazquez, Executive Director of Jamestown Housing Authority, cautioned against using the word “project” when describing affordable housing due to the negative connotations from 1970s housing projects. Bryer offered the suggestion of “attainable housing” that came from a resident.

IV. Town funding for Jamestown Housing Authority (JHA) – review, discussion and/or action and/or vote

Plain recused himself as Chair because he is a board member of JHA. Case assumed the role of chair during the discussion. Vazquez said that the JHA has 35 units for senior and disabled housing that was federally built in 1968. The housing authority received \$71,000 for capital funds this year. JHA just renovated some bathrooms, which had asbestos in them and the cost per unit was \$36,000. The low funding dollars each year do not work out to keep the JHA renovated. The JHA needs millions to really renovate and provide safe sanitary affordable housing and to be a good neighbor. Trying to look at many different ways to renovate and update the property and one example is Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) to update the property. JHA is looking at creative ways to get financing and they need help to create a plan. The idea is to attain more units, work with the Town, State and Federal government.

Case asked what would you like to do to upgrade existing housing? We understand that it hasn't been upgraded. What kind of help do you need? Vazquez said that the JHA received a \$1.5 million emergency grant to upgrade electric and HVAC. However, a lot of equipment is backordered and the one-time grant runs out on September 30th. The JHA needs to figure out a work around. Also, the units on Pemberton Avenue do not have the infrastructure to plug in 35 mini splits, so RI Energy needs to build a transformer.

Vazquez said that the Town gave a small emergency grant at the beginning and was supportive in the emergency but most of that funding did not carry over and was not spent.

Vazquez explained that 12 units, built in 1992, are section 202 which is funded through RI Housing for Seniors and the residents pay 30% of income. Pease asked what is their need? Vazquez said that the units are on cement slabs and have issues with groundwater. They have heat and electricity. State is holding onto funds for energy incentive and JHA will be applying for the funds for 12 units. They units have federal pacific breakers that are out of date and almost illegal.

Discussion ensued about HUD. Vazquez noted that HUD does not want to be in the business of housing. HUD can subsidize people's rent. The subsidies can be project-based vouchers or for rental assistance.

Discussion ensued how JAHC and JHA could work together. Is there the ability for JHA to be part of the Town in order to share resources and have full-time staff? There is not a financial relationship with Town and JHA. Gorelick said that we could collaborate for systemic change. Vazquez said that she will share information with JAHC on where JHA will go from here. Vazquez noted that there are two empty units because the bathrooms cannot get fixed and there is an active waitlist.

Nikki – initial call with HUD next week to discuss creating a capital needs assessment. Vazquez noted that the federal government incorrectly matched Jamestown with Fall River and Providence rental markets and not with Newport County.

Vazquez said there was a non-profit formed, The Friends of Jamestown Housing, to help attain funding from groups like the Chaplain Foundation or RI Foundation

Bryer said that this is beginning of discussions about working together instead of in silos.

V. Policy proposals – review, discussion, and/or action and/or vote (20 min)

a. CLT/Jamestown Sustainable Resident Program

Bryer said that she spoke to the Town Council at the July 15, 2024 meeting with an update on the Sustainable Resident Program Pilot Program. She said it was received well by the Council and they said to proceed with the program.

- b. Senior Housing - none
- c. Affordable Lot Program - none
- d. Affordable ADU Program - none

VI. Funding Mechanisms of Affordable Housing – none

VII. Tools and Techniques for Creating Affordable Housing in Jamestown – none

VIII. Member Reports – none

IX. Future Meetings and agenda items of Affordable housing Committee - review, discussion and/or action and/or vote (5 min)

Plain said at the next meeting he wants to have a visioning session to figure out what the next steps for the committee are. He asked that everyone come with a short list of priorities.

Next meeting August 21, 2024 at 5:15pm.

X. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at 6:19 pm was moved by Pease and seconded by Case. All in favor.

Attest:

Carrie Kolb