

## **Minutes of the meeting of the CICA Affordable Housing Committee, Monday November 7, 2011 at 7:15 at the Parish House**

Present: Donna Damon, Deb Hall, Beth Howe, Ruth Slagle, David Whiston and John Wilson.  
Absent: Mabel Doughty and Bob Earnest

Beth asked John whether we should wait for Bob. David said he would call Bob and see if he was on the island and coming or still coming back from his trip. He called, and Bob said he was not back but hoped to make it to the meeting later. He hoped John and Beth would proceed.

### **1. School House Road duplex**

Beth said that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the logic of the proposal to move much of the preparation for the School House Road project till the spring. There were two considerations. One was that MSHA was moving slowly – had not had a quorum at last Wednesday's Finance Committee meeting and had to round up votes, and they seemed reluctant to schedule the final closing meeting. But we need to have the closing before December 12 in order to pay Keiser for the building. John added that there is the additional complication that MSHA's legal office, which has to review our project, is having to do a lot of work to respond to the Legislature's investigation of the agency.

The other consideration that suggested delay was that there may well be critical contingencies that turn out to be impossible to meet. We only have one window for the bargaining. If we order the building but can't bring it out to the island, we would have to pay Keiser for storing it over the winter. The concrete people are in a hurry to get started. While the weather is fine now, we could have snow and freezing weather.

And another important factor was that, once we began to think about delaying the project, we saw advantages to it. Deb had been worried about having applicants in December/January; spring would be better for this. The road will have time to settle. The price of the concrete work might be less, and we would have time to have the closing with MSHA.

Donna said that Kids Place was brought out in February. John said it did not require a crane.

There was some discussion of these reasons for delaying the project until spring. Donna asked whether the foundation would be poured this fall or done in the spring. Beth said she understood that some money might be saved by doing it in the spring. Wayne will finish the road which will have time to settle and firm up during the winter. Everyone agreed that it made sense to have the delay

Donna said that she and Mabel had been talking about the role of the Committee in the project. All the other building committees that they have been on – Historical, Rec, Library – have discussed the bids and decided which bids to accept, and were involved in the decisions about the building options. She said she does not know who the bidders were, not only for the general contractor, but for the other bids as well. And she didn't realize that we were hiring Bob's company. Her image was that his role would be like that of volunteers on these other projects who kept track of the project progress; not making decisions about how it would be done. Also

the price of the project has gone up. She doesn't think that Bob is taking advantage of the Committee, but the process of how decisions get made has not been transparent. How did Bob come to be the GC when he had decided not to put in a bid for it because of conflict of interest? What are the terms of the contract with him?

John said that Bob was doing the project for the cost that had been put in the budget, though the amount of work is much more than that would cover. John didn't think that the role of the Housing Committee was the same as a building committee. It was more of a policy-making role. The policy was to hire a General Contractor, and John is glad that Bob is willing to take on this responsibility. He does not need to look at the bids – that is the Contractor's job Bob has been working hard to get the project completed in a short time. Now that we have some breathing room, there can be time to report more thoroughly on the decisions that were made.

Deb said that she was bothered by the way the price of the project has gone up. We originally promised the community that we would do the project within the MSHA grant amount and now we are having to take out a mortgage. How did we get from the idea of building on a slab, to a crawl space and then full basements. Wayne says that it will cost \$20,000 more to have full basements. And now we will be having sheds as well. Beth said that is because there is no exterior access to the basements because the excavation for that would cost even more. Deb said she thinks we should scale the project back to be within the \$350,000 – if not the basements, then maybe have fewer bathrooms or bedrooms.

Someone said that it has been a problem that there has been a small group of people making the decisions, without consulting or reporting to the rest of the Committee. Deb said the project needs to be transparent because the community gave the land for it. Donna said it is not just an issue of the project costing more money, it is an issue of the public perception of the project. When she and Deb are asked by members of the public about the project, they don't have answers about what is happening or how decisions are made.

John said that the Town only gave the land. Working with government agencies like MSHA adds to the time it takes to develop a project and to the cost.. David said now that we have more time, we may be able to discuss why the choices were made.

Deb said that Keiser has been doing projects with MSHA before and why should this project go up in price. David said he had been talking with the affordable housing person in Islesboro. He said that working with MSHA is a pain.

Deb said the role of the Housing Committee in this process is not clear. John said it is not a building committee.

Donna said that when the Committee was discussing the site clearing and excavation, Bob would not tell us who the excavator bidders were. She said she thought the committee should have discussed the bids. Beth said that was something she should have raised at that point. Deb said she would have liked to discuss the decision about the basements – have had the information about the estimated costs for the various options. Like the discussion of the shutters and grids on the windows. Beth said that discussion of all of these points takes a lot of time, and time has

been short. Deb said that we can't have everything that we would like to have, so what were the tradeoffs so that we might have had bulkheads and hardwood floors.

John said that now we have more time and can talk about these things.

Beth said that one of the things that was still on the table in relation to the application materials was the issue of whether to allow pets. Deb said that she thought we should allow pets and require a higher security deposit for people who do. Ruth said, of course there will be island people who will say how foolish it is for us to allow pets; look at the damage they do. Deb asked John how much extra insurance cost would be required by allowing pets? Is it an issue of liability – dog bites neighbor – or of damage to the unit?

2. Beth said there is one more issue that has been added to the agenda. We had agreed that we would make the decision about selling 226 at this (or next week's) meeting. She said that with the delaying of the School House Road project, the central constraint of letting May know our decision in time to apply for SHR, has been put off. The subcommittee on the sale of 226 has been gathering information and making good progress. But it would help them not to have to make the decision so soon.

3. It was decided to have a meeting next Tuesday, November 15, usual time and place, to discuss the points about the process and the role of the Committee raised at this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Howe