

Minutes of the CICA Housing Committee Meeting Monday July18, 2011 at 7:15 at the Parish House

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

1. Progress on School House Road Project

Construction:

Bob reported on the construction issues. The site plan has been tweaked by Dick Sweet to change the location of the septic system a little. In addition, since we have widened the road in order to get the pieces of the house in, we need to have a Tier 1 wetland permit from DEP. Dick Sweet has mapped the wetlands and will file the application when the issues around the deed are settled.

Bob has been working on dealing with the issues that Norm Fecteau raised in his memo of a couple of weeks ago. That work is now nearly complete.

Bob also dug two test pits on the property and found, not ledge, but gravel down at least 6.5'. If MSHA will agree to this, we may be able to use the gravel for the driveway. He is recommending tonight that we have a full basement rather than a crawl space. John said he thought this would be good; and MSHA prefers it. Will there be issues about water. Bob said that there had not been water in the bottom of the test holes, but it has been dry. He thinks there should be perimeter drains both inside and outside the basement. Donna asked if he planned to have a well for a sump pump. Bob said he had not thought about that, but it would be easier to put in during construction than afterward. Gives extra protection.

Donna said she thought the MSHA regs for something like gravel are too complex. Bob said that having gravel on the site can be considered "green" and that is in our favor.

Spring Island's architect, Curt, has suggested some changes in the floor plans for the building: one is to drop the downstairs shower and have stairs to the basement there. Also have one less door to the kitchen and open up the kitchen and dining room. Move the refrigerator to the pantry. Donna suggested having a work island for more storage space. Bob said it could even be moveable. Also there could be storage along the dining room wall that has no window. Beth said she liked the idea of having a window. Donna suggested flipping over the floor plan for the right unit so that the kitchen would be inside and the dining room outside. Sound deadening should not be an issue with this arrangement. Bob said he would talk to Keiser about all these ideas.

After the construction issues are completed, the project will go for financial review. There are some catch 22 problems with the payment to Keiser for the building because MSHA is used to having construction loans, which we want to not have.

On barging, Lionel Plante has two barges now which means that it may be possible to bring out more units in a single day. Bob is working on this. There is still a lot of work to be done on the logistics, so Bob does not have a time frame for finishing the project.

Transfer of Land:

Beth reported that all the deed exchanges with abutters have been completed and the deed transferring the land from the Town to CICA was signed by the Selectmen last Wednesday. Lew had suggested running the deed and MOU by MSHA's legal department. Bob has done this and they did have an objection to something in the MOU. But the MSHA lawyer has talked with Lew and they worked out language that was satisfactory to MSHA and David Slatery for the Town. Beth will now see about getting the Selectmen to sign the new version. Donna said that maybe they will have to vote on the change.

Selection Criteria and Procedures:

Beth reported that the subcommittee on this had met and basically agreed to using the various criteria/application forms and lease as were developed for 226 South Road. However there was interest in changing some specific provisions to make the criteria more open to single people, to make the duplex a no smoking area and having member of the Application Review Committee represent Chebeague voluntary organizations.

Smoking: John said he thinks as a practical matter it might increase the insurance rates and requires extra cleaning. Ruth said that it might put off some people from applying, but that was not necessarily a problem. Donna said that smoking outdoors could cause a forest fire. Everyone agreed that smoking should not be allowed in the building or on the parcel.

Donna asked whether MSHA has a definition of a family. Bob said he did not think so. John suggested that we use the 1040 form to determine whether people are a "family" -- filing jointly -- or single people filing separately.

Donna said that the original CICA emphasis on housing for young people may make it difficult to serve some older single people who do need this kind of housing. Bob said we should stick with the original wording about children in school -- but maybe loosen it up to include all children. Donna asked if college students would qualify. Beth said they still usually have legal residence on the island. Donna also said that often young people like Rachel share apartments. Why couldn't this be used here? Beth said she thought that is something that young people are more willing to do than older people. Someone suggested that we could ask whether each single applicant would be willing to share a unit with someone else.

John said we could avoid the specific school issue but accomplish somewhat the same purpose by having a policy of serving as many people as possible in the housing. In general, however, he thinks that the market will do a better job of sorting out who needs affordable housing than formal criteria.

Donna asked how "essential" was defined in work essential to the island. Bob said it has originally been intended to cover people like teachers. Donna said she thought work on the mainland was as useful to the island as work on it. What about fishermen? John said he thought it would make sense to take the work criterion out altogether.

Beth pointed out that the Application Evaluation Committee had originally wanted criteria to make their decisions more rational, fair and defensible, and this would not be helped by taking

out too many criteria. Someone suggested having a place on the application to allow people to say what about them should weigh in their favor – a kind of “other”.

Beth said she could find out what other islands use as selection criteria. Mary Terry may know this.

Makeup of the Application Review Committee: Beth said that a member of the subcommittee had suggested having other voluntary organizations nominate members of this committee, or at least try to have a range of representation of such organizations. Several people asked why representation of non-profits should be a criterion. Beth said she thought it was a way of having members who are engaged in the community. There was not support for this idea. Donna said that it might make more sense to have representatives of different age groups.

Beth said that at present there are no formal criteria for membership on this committee. We just asked people who we thought would be willing and able. The issue is to have people who will be generally seen as objective and without conflicts. Someone suggested advertising for members. Others agreed with this idea.

Insurance issues:

John has had several questions from our insurance agent that he does not have answers for. (1) Do we have contracts for things like maintenance of the heating system, snow removal or lawn mowing. Bob said we had decided to have the tenants do the mowing and arranging for snow plowing. Donna asked what if they don't do it? Bob said they risk losing their lease. If these services were contracted out, could the cost be included in the rent? Beth said the rent is 28% of the person's income, so no.

(2) Pets: Do we allow pets? Beth said we have, but so far have only fish and hamsters – no dogs or cats. John said that allowing pets can make insurance more expensive because they can do damage. Someone said this is more a matter of how the owner cares for and controls the pet. But the group somewhat reluctantly agreed to have a no pets policy.

(3) John asked if we have an interview with the applicants? Beth said no, but Bob said we generally know the applicants. John asked if there is a formal background check. Beth said no.

2. 226 South Road

Beth said that Genesis has agreed to extend our mortgage for another year. John said we have told them that next spring, after we have some experience with the occupancy and cash flow from School House Road, we will be in a good position to decide whether to keep the house as a rental or sell it; and the market may be a little better.

3. Internet

Bob said that Chebeague.net is interested in having CICA be involved, but he is still not clear about what role they want CICA to play. Someone asked whether if a non-profit works with a for-profit company does that challenge its non-profit designation? John said that the Island Institute has been working this through. It can be done, but has to be done carefully. One idea had been to have CICA sponsor a community meeting on the issues and alternatives for dealing

with improving the island internet service. John said he would have further conversation with David about what David sees the long-term picture and goal for Chebeague.net to be.

4. PACE

Ruth reported that she did not go to the workshop on PACE, but that she had been looking at their website and found that Chebeague is not on the list of towns that have adopted the program and have a contract with Efficiency Maine. Also Doug Ross is not on their list of auditors. Beth said it was her fault that the State was not notified that we had adopted the program. Ruth suggested having a public hearing about the program this summer while summer people are here. Some of them might be interested in upgrading the energy efficiency of their houses for longer use during the year or in retirement. Beth said she would talk with Eric about notifying the State, and that she and Ruth should talk about having a public meeting in August.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Howe