

Minutes
Winthrop Town Council
Special Meeting

Thursday November 15, 2007 at 7:00 pm

Town Office

Attendance: Chair Patrice Putman, Councilors Ken Buck, Patricia Engdahl, James Norris, Linda Caprara, Kevin Cookson, Town Manager – Cornell Knight, Code Enforcement Officer Beth Young, 30 residents.

Chair Putman called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Item # 114 Affordable/Workforce Housing Discussion.

Chair Putman reviewed the packet of information and the notes from the Affordable housing meeting held in April 2005. According to the MSHA, the 2006 median income is \$45,683, and can afford a \$128,179 home, but the median home is \$157,500. The school enrollment has declined from 1067 students in 2000 to 845 today and a loss of state revenue for each student. The population estimate is that Winthrop has grown from 6,232 in 2000 to 6,480 today.

Russ Hazard said the Town of Sydney is growing because taxes are low. Winthrop needs to make the community more attractive. Apartments should not be built because the person does not create equity. Duplexes should be built.

Kevin Cookson said the town loses \$6,300 per student in state revenue.

Priscilla Jenkins asked about the rents, vacancies and if there are any problems at the Section 8 housing developments in town.

Jim Norris asked the audience if the town should act as a developer to subsidize a project.

Michael Czado asked the council why does anyone want to move here? The town beach is not a place families want to visit. The town should be promoted and the webstie should be improved.

Jeff Heinz said the town should help developers with the costs to develop the land such as a TIF. The taxes, infrastructure and utility costs on the property while waiting for sales, increase the price that the developer has to get for the house to make a profit.

Jon Carpenter said the birth rate is declining all over the country. Because most Maine homes are heated with oil, the oil crisis will create a glut of homes and there will soon be a mass exodus from the state.

Ken Johnson said jobs are needed in the region for people to move here and buy homes.

Linda Caprara asked about the number of vacant apartments.

Steve Robbins said he is opposed to TIFs for developers. There are a few apartments for rent but are often not decent housing and that zoning changes are needed to get the cost of construction down.

Terry Despres said the town should look and learn from the isolated pockets of growth in the region such as Turner, Livermore and east of Augusta. The birth rate is a problem for the schools to maintain quality programs. The growth in jobs is in Augusta.

Ed Vigneault asked how the town's student population reduction compared to the rest of the state.

Rae Giampetro suggested public transportation would help families since Winthrop is close to both Augusta and Lewiston/Auburn.

Jayne Despres said the Winthrop Regional Development Corporation is working with a consultant on a regional economic development program for more jobs in the area.

Jon Carpenter said there should be a study done to determine if there is an affordable housing problem. According to HUD there are 628 rental units in Winthrop.

Chair Putman reviewed the highlights:

More publicity for the community, highlight the positives, improve the website.

Review the zoning ordinance for amendments that could help with affordable housing projects and lower the cost of building housing units.

Keep working on economic development to create jobs in the area that will attract families.

The council will meet with the Planning Board in January to discuss the zoning ordinance.

The town manager will look into the cost of a housing study.

Motion Cookson Seconded by Caprara to adjourn at 9:07 pm. Vote 6-0.