

Governor's Advisory Commission on Manufactured and Mobile Homes

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2004

Present: John Hall, Dave Adams, Rick DeAngelis (VHCB for Jim Libby), Richard Highter, Ted Wimpey, Caryl Stewart, Richard Williams, Stuart Bennett, Steve Sease, Bob McDonald, Karen Horn (VLCT for Steve Jeffrey)

Absent: Tom Candon, Elisabeth Kulas, Karen Richards, Peter Heck

Staff: Jim Saudade, Arthur Hamlin

Convene and Introductions

John Hall convened the Advisory Commission at 1:10 p.m. Each person then introduced him or herself and stated where they work, and how they are involved in manufactured housing and/or mobile home park issues.

Jim Saudade gave an overview of the Executive Order. Jim stated that the Department's role is to provide administrative support and we don't have any preset "agenda". He explained that the Department is willing to do research, arrange for testimony, and travel to learn about other States' manufactured housing and mobile home park programs. Jim and Arthur will staff the Commission and any subcommittee meetings.

Richard Williams asked if the Department's list of "troubled parks" could be available to the Commission. This is a list of several mobile home parks with current problems that the Department uses to keep on top of any needed action by DHCA or other agencies. Jim said that the list is a 'public document' that DHCA would be happy to provide.

Arthur went through the resource binders provided by the Department. The binders include a complete copy of the final report of the 1994 advisory commission, and relevant statutes and regulations. The Department has other reports and studies that can be made available plus a list of possible issues for discussion based on the kinds of problems we see everyday. Arthur explained that the model lease in the 1994 advisory commission report is no longer being used. Bob McDonald asked if the newer model lease developed by CVOEO is included. It is not but could be provided, and is on the Department's website.

Attendees discussed meeting schedules, with Jim Saudade suggesting that the full Commission meet monthly with most meetings held at DHCA in Montpelier. Stuart Bennett asked if the Department could ask other people to come to a meeting. These might include co-op mobile home park expert from New Hampshire or someone from Maine's housing finance agency, for example. The Department agreed they could arrange for guests to meet with the Commission.

Issues

Jim Saudade asked the attendees to state the main issues and problems that they would like to see the Commission work on.

Caryl Stewart – Better secondary market with VHFA; continue national discussions; treat mobile homes as real property instead of chattel.

Stuart Bennett – Allow sub-metering of water; increase availability of alternative septic systems; open public funding to all park owners due to rent control in place.

Ted Wimpey – Primary concern is mobile home park closures; relocation assistance for residents when parks close; education of park owners and residents; how to deal with aging and deteriorating mobile homes re: financing improvements or replacement.

Richard Williams – Infrastructure issues; how to deal with aging and deteriorating mobile homes; look at new ways to resolve landlord and tenant problems; tackle mobile home financing issues.

Karen Horn – Handle mobile home taxation issues that come up from time to time; concerned with infrastructure issues from a town perspective i.e. road maintenance and water and sewer.

Steve Sease – Concerned with permit issues; development of new mobile home parks; existing issues such as mobile home parks in flood zones; what is ANR's role?

Richard Highter – Primary concern is mobile home park closures; better ways to resolve resident “problems”; property taxes increase even though mobile homes depreciate.

Rick DeAngelis – Most important is preservation of existing stock whether nonprofit or for-profit; wants to determine appropriate amount of public investment to keep a mobile home park viable; poor quality of many mobile homes; income of mobile home park residents re: affordability.

Dave Adams – Expand financing options; counter act “open door” for predatory lenders; address mobile home depreciation caused by quality, stigma and infrastructure issues; improve due diligence for nonprofit mobile home park buyouts; want lender protections in place for mobile homes and parks; improve delivery system for VHFA refinance loans.

Bob McDonald – Pursue pilot project in New Hampshire building new cooperative mobile home park; affordability issues caused by high lot rent etc; mobile home owner education; more long term financing at reasonable rates with good title.

Arthur Hamlin – Resident education about rights and responsibilities and how to access those; mobile home park cooperative development or conversion; mobile home financing issues; encourage new development of manufactured housing.

Jim Saudade – Helping people who are in crisis situations; providing a source other than CDBG for relocation costs when parks close; giving DHCA necessary tools; most importantly doing something about the housing shortage in Vermont.

Organizing and Planning

Jim summarized the major issues, and the Commission agreed to create subcommittees.

- The following people volunteered for a financing subcommittee: Caryl Stewart, David Adams, Stuart Bennett, and Bob McDonald.
- The following people volunteered for an infrastructure subcommittee: Ted Wimpey, Stephen Sease, David Adams, and Richard Williams.
- A separate meeting on mobile home “Co-ops” will be scheduled.

The Department agreed to draft and submit ideas on behalf of the Commission to the Consolidated Plan Advisory Committee for the five-year Consolidated Plan update. Caryl suggested that the mobile home section could be strengthened regarding using public money for infrastructure improvements.

An open discussion took place with various questions and ideas. Answering questions from Bob and Karen, the Department agreed to provide the 2001 Registry of Mobile Home Parks and the upcoming 2004 Registry to the Commission next year. The report will show a decline in number of mobile home parks and lots and increasing rent. Arthur said there is also Census data on mobile homes generally in Vermont on the Department website, and the Department would be happy to do additional research. Richard asked a question if it is possible to determine whether the rules and regulations in place have made things better or worse? Jim said the State of Maine has been using innovating TIF (Tax incremental financing) for development and is more “mobile home friendly”. Ted suggested that the rules and regulations should be evaluated, and Caryl added another issue is aesthetics. She has visited the Skyline Homes plant in Fair Haven.

Scheduling

Stuart asked about timeframes for the Commission. The Commission is authorized through 2005. Jim suggested short-term goals might include recommendations for the 2005 legislative session; mid-range goals might include rules or programs that could be worked out next summer, and long-term goals might involve more detailed legislative proposals for 2006.

At Richard’s suggestion, the Department agreed to get information about the Commission to park owners and residents, through mass mailings, its website and possibly the CVOEO Mobile Home Project newsletter.

The next full Commission meeting was set for Tuesday, October 26, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. at the DHCA conference rooms A/B, 6th Floor of the North Lobby at the National Life Insurance Building.

Financing subcommittee will meet Friday, October 15, 2004 from 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. at the DHCA conference room C.

Infrastructure subcommittee will meet Friday, October 15, 2004 from 11:00 – 12:00 at the DHCA conference room C following the financing subcommittee.

A mobile home cooperatives subcommittee was formed, pending the Department organizing a special meeting. Volunteers were: Ted Wimpey, Richard Highter, Caryl Stewart, Jim Libby, and Robert McDonald. The Department will invite representatives from NH Community Loan Fund to the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.