

Sheffield Housing Commission
Minutes of meeting
January 6th 2011

The Sheffield Housing Commission met at the Sheffield Town Hall on January 6th 2011-7:30 pm. Members present were: Marilyn Wightman, Kathy Orlando, Michael Citrin , John Stookey and Paul O'Brien.

Guests : Tom Matuszko-Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC)
Brian Domina-Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC)
Jocelyn Ayer- Accessory Apartment Coordinator, HousingUs

Michael Citrin brought the meeting to order. The minutes were reviewed and approved for the December 21st 2010 meeting.

The meeting began with Chairman Citrin describing the purpose of the meeting-to discuss the Sheffield Housing Commission's ideas to improve/modify bylaw(s) associated with accessory apartments. The Commission's guests were on hand to help the Commission clarify their thinking on accessory apartments.

Jocelyn Ayer discussed the accessory apartment program as it exists in several local towns. She reviewed the **Accessory Apartment Guide for Sheffield**, explaining the various components of the guide.

Tom Matuszko discussed the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's role in helping cities and towns with issues concerning bylaws. He described his Commission as a "Municipal Consulting" agency-specifically the BRPC can help the Sheffield Housing Commission with their work on bylaw(s) language.

Chairman Citrin stated that his review of the town bylaws show that the bylaws are generally friendly in allowing another unit within an existing structure. However, questions arise when considering accessory apartments in buildings that are not attached to the house, or accessory apartments and their particular lot size etc. Jocelyn Ayer suggested that we use GIS data to look at the issue of lot size within each of the town districts.

Tom Matuszko discussed the difficulty involved in making changes to any bylaws-planning is very important, and the process used to make changes must be thoughtful. He also stated that the creation of accessory apartments is on the list of items that BRPC uses to assist towns that are looking for additional housing options. There are several concrete things that can be done to our present bylaw(s) to improve the language, relative to accessory apartments. He turned over the discussion to his associate, Brian Domina, who has been studying Sheffield's bylaws.

Brian Domina began by asking the Sheffield Housing Commission clarifying questions:

1. Does the SHC want accessory apartments in all four districts ?
2. Can rural districts have attached accessory apartments ?
3. Can the general business area have accessory apartments ?
4. Does the SHC want accessory apartments in unattached buildings in the rural district ?
5. Are there conditions or standards that the SHC could suggest when allowing accessory apartments (ie: parking, lighting, exterior stairs etc) ?

Tom Matuszko suggested that the use of conditions or standards in the town bylaws could be a way to address many of the issues associated with changes to the bylaws. Some of those conditions could include square footage, as well as having the owner live in the building with the accessory apartment, these were suggested as examples of conditions. He also stated that the BRPC would review bylaws from other towns regarding accessory apartments and report back to the SHC with suggestions/ideas to help us draft our revision(s).

Kathy Orlando asked if we would be adjusting our present bylaw(s) or creating new bylaw(s) to address the accessory apartment issue. Tom Matuszko responded by saying it would be a combination of both of those approaches. He also said that BRPC will draft a list of suggestions, based on what was discussed this evening, and have those items available for the SHC next meeting on the 19th of January.

A discussion by the entire group took place regarding the process, procedures, and time-lines necessary for adoption of a revised bylaw(s) for the May town meeting.

In closing, a review of “Why do we need accessory apartments ?” in Sheffield was held, responses centered around-families being able to have an apartment for a child, as a source of income for a family or individual, an affordable housing option for an individual etc.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm

The next meeting will be held on January 19th at 7:30 pm

Respectfully submitted Paul O’Brien