

Carroll County Lands and Annex Subcommittee

Date: September 22 2023
Location: Carroll County Annex
Time: 3:00 pm
Present: Subcommittee Chairman Mark McConkey
Representative Richard Brown
Representative David Paige
Mellisa Seamans, Executive Coordinator
NH Executive Councilor Joe Kenney
Commissioner Bill Nelson
Public Present: Joy Gagnon
Josh Kaake
Dallas Emery
David Babson

Councilor Kenney:

State of NH received about \$60 million immediately in ARPA funding during Covid to stabilize the childcare system. The first tranche went to individual childcare facilities to use for operations to stabilize their facilities. Discretionary funding (about \$29 million) towards workforce development, educational programs to encourage the workforce to get educated and computers, software, infrastructure. Many groups around the state trying to address childcare challenges.

Funding options for childcare facility construction:

- Community Development Block Grants
County applications tend to rank higher than town or non-profit applications
\$500,000 +/- grants
- Federal Delegation direct appropriation funding (USDA)
- Tax-credits through NH Community Development Finance Authority (NHCDFA.org)

Experience in seeing these capital projects – year one is feasibility and design, year two secure funding, year three construction. Little Antlers in Plymouth built \$2.5 million facility and stacked several different types of funding. (www.littleantlers.org/news-blogs-and-events). Second round of funding for community centers – about \$9 million – could be tapped into if childcare center is a family resource center. Could build the childcare center and bring in an organization to manage the site, county would own the building. Recommend childcare centers have an umbrella group such as hospital, medical group – health insurance, better salaries, etc. At one point in the pandemic, 70% of childcare centers were under duress. Fragile institution. Stuart Gates at CDFA can assist with creating a business model. 2nd round of community center grants will be available soon. Can be used for childcare center if it is a resource center

Housing:

- Demolition funding part of Invest NH program
- Another \$15 million available for housing so 2nd round of housing funding soon
- CDBG grants, tax credits, USDA funding

Unspent funds through DHHS and GOFERR; BEA Commissioner Caswell looking at how to redirect this funding. All of the State agencies are going to have money left over from ARPA. The Governor can redirect the money – he did this with \$23 million for veteran's housing in Franklin. Suggest applying for technical assistance/feasibility study grant through CDFA.

Rep. McConkey: If we take the time to do assessments, studies do we run the risk of losing out on pools of money available now?

Councilor Kenney: Technical grants available on a rolling basis; I would apply right away. There are enough resources to fund building a childcare center. For housing, coordinate with NH Housing Finance Authority.

If building housing on County campus, suggest leveraging public/private partnership. Challenge is getting the right developer who knows regulations and funding, etc.

Councilor Kenney: Will put together some notes and send along to Rep. McConkey

Mr. Emery: Is there any way to free up some of the conservation land to allow for construction of affordable single family homes?

Rep. McConkey: I encourage people who want to put land in conservation to consider keeping a portion of it out for housing
Councilor Kenney:

Conservation is good but eventually we are going to run out of any opportunity for housing. Property in Dummer of 800 acres. Family is selling it to Nature Conservancy who is selling to NH Fish and Game. After a while we are going to run out of any land for housing opportunities. Conservation trusts are aggressive dedicated groups. What are the impacts on the local communities as they gather up land to conserve? They are going after the best of the best land and the average citizen can't afford two or three acres. Mentioned law that limits conservation to a percentage. Will have to work with local planning and zoning boards. Town has first right of refusal and then NH Housing Finance Authority.

A lot of State land to be disposed in Conway from the "bypass" days. There is a movement to protect the Saco River. The planning and zoning board would like to put a halt on the State giving up any land on the North-South Road to allow for time for the town to work on their Master Plan to determine how to protect the watershed, create a buffer zone, what is available for housing. Action is at the planning and zoning board level – will there be a balanced approach for the future of your community – housing, job opportunities, transportation, etc.

Rep. Brown: We need to clarify with the commissioners' scope of childcare, housing to make sure we have the right direction that they want to go in. We are a working committee to support them.

Ms. Gagnon:

- Ossipee got a grant to update their master plan
- Ossipee Zoning Revision Committee drafted changes that passed Town meeting
- Avesta is attending next Ossipee Roundtable meeting; invited the committee
- Affordable housing based on median income. Unfortunately, influx of new people changes the median income
- The amount of money spent on housing people in motels was astronomical. Where could that money have been spent to permanently house people

Rep. Brown:

Our committee is specifically looking at workforce housing on the County property. There are a lot of issues including preserving farmland. Has the housing group put together a white paper of sorts to highlight issues and share with the Delegation? When we are in the State House we need to know the issues and how we can help

Rep. McConkey:

- Moving cautiously on the housing piece; has to make sense for the taxpayers
- Looking at overlay districts on County or State land
- Ossipee could be the opportunity to be the shining star of how to do housing

Rep. Paige:

This specific committee is to determine how we can use County lands to meet the needs at the County – workforce housing, childcare.

Discussion about if not on County-owned land, could the County partner with non-profit or private developer to develop workforce housing on other nearby parcels to create housing for County workers.

Rep. McConkey

We are looking a model like the one we visited in Dover – tenants pay a maximum of 30% of their income. This won't happen unless we have a motivated partner – a hospital, healthcare organization. Cannot rule out the County being that partner. Under the right circumstances, the County could be the conduit that does this building but it has to make sense.

Rep. Paige

Memorial Hospital is already doing this on an adjacent property in Conway. When talking about trying to recruit and retain – what is worth it? If we're not spending it on housing and childcare, we are spending it somewhere else – higher salaries, agency. We should have this conversation with taxpayers. We don't have a housing problem; we have a housing availability problem...the houses are there.

By 2030, 50% of the population in Carroll County will be 65+ years old. 46% of the housing in Ossipee is "vacant" (due to high percentage of seasonal homes)

Rep. McConkey

The water system study has been a very slow process. Initially it looks like the system may support a daycare. Plenty of land to add additional wells for housing.

Ms. Gagnon

Age-friendly housing could receive wider support from the community. Rep. McConkey requested Ms. Gagnon send more information to him about this.

Rep. McConkey

Request that the Delegation be allowed to listen in on the next Siemens meeting (10/3/23). Request the Committee be able to watch the Zoom recording from prior Siemens' meeting (9/19/23).

Rep. Paige

We are having really good conversations but I would like to have a timeline, agenda, goals for the committee. Rep. McConkey asked Rep. Paige to draft these

MOTION: **Approve the September 7 2023 meeting minutes** by Rep. Brown, 2nd Rep. Paige. Passed 3-0

NEXT MEETING: **Friday, October 6 at 3:00pm**

Tasks

- Invite Children Unlimited for a discussion about interest in family resource center in Ossipee. (www.childrenunlimitedinc.org)
- Invite Jen Stillwell (MWV Housing Coalition) to next meeting
- Survey of County employees – childcare, housing
- Invite OCC (Meals on Wheels/Childcare to next meeting

Minutes approved on _____

Rep. Mark McConkey, Committee Chairman