

NAIC MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

12 noon

Present:

Rabbi Jon Spira-Savett, Rev. Kristy Besada, Pam Wellman, John Rowntree, Matthew Hodgkiss, Meta Vornehm, Barbara Blue, Meg Hamm, [Sally Newhall](#), Tom Woodward, [Aron DiBacco](#), Jim Jensen, Rich Bessinger, [Joan Goeckel](#), Rev. Kim Hester, Carla Tolomeo, [Anna Molettieri](#), Mike Greene, [Mike Apfelberg](#), Nancy Meyer, Rev. Allison Palm, Terri Behm, Rev. Karl Hester, Rev. Greg Baker, Rosemary Crawford-Smith, Nony Egbuonu

Meeting called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Rabbi Jon, who invited introductions and opened with a prayer.

Affordable Housing Crisis Issues:

At least 2,000 units short in Nashua alone.

Inventory of homes is roughly 20%

Shortage of lumber, bricks, drywall, etc.

Prices are soaring

Not just the costs to build, but fees they pay to build; all of this drives rental and purchase costs up.

\$28/hour to afford a minimal decent cost of living in Nashua. Local and state governments leaning more and more on charitable organizations like Family Promise and NSKS

40% of Nashuans are renters, and 44% of renters are rent-stressed.

Existing affordable housing units in Nashua (Aron DiBacco)

Bronstein: families will be moving out shortly and City of Nashua is helping to relocate the families temporarily (up to 2 years).

Adding 150 units; all but 10 will be market-rate (?)

Housing Justice Group of Greater Nashua (open invitation to anyone who wishes to be involved!):

Rabbi Jon Spira-Savett, Rev. Sally Newhall, Rev. Allison Palm, Rev. Kristy Besada, Rev. Tom Woodward, Aron DiBacco (GSOP), Rev. Tanya Stormo Rasmussen

Presenters:

Rabbi Jon

[Kristy Besada](#) shared in 2019, Median

Aron DiBacco

[Sally Newhall](#)

One-third of the people who work in Nashua cannot afford to live here given the costs of housing.

Housing Justice Group has been advocating for the following with the Imagine Nashua/masterplan initiative:
Housing Affordability and Accessibility;
Housing Diversity and Stability;
Environmental Sustainability;
Connection and Livability;
Expand Education and Leverage Partnerships.

City has recently created an Affordable Housing Trust Fund (currently has only \$30K in the fund; needs much more funding) in order to support landlords to be able to offer their units at affordable rates.

Hoping that by working with City of Nashua officials (especially with Sarah Marchant, who has been very responsive and interactive with the Housing Justice advocacy group), a firm number and commitment to building affordable housing units will materialize.

Need houses of worship/faith communities to mobilize and inform their congregations, and also recruiting folks from other social networks who may be interested in the issue and possess skills or connections that will assist in furthering the agenda of advocating for affordable housing in our area.

How do we do the public relations work of de-stigmatizing the term "affordable housing"?

1. What are the innovative ways this is being looked at?
2. What avenues does the community have other than federal funds; 3. is the city planning to concentrate affordable housing in the downtown or spread throughout the city; 4. how do people access affordable housing; 4. transportation - we need more robust transportation; 5. what are the real numbers of the ability of a teacher in Nashua to be able to find affordable housing here?

Opening rooms in existing houses to young adults (transitional), changing zoning laws, stable housing helps build community/improve mental health

My subgroup talked about the tremendous availability of "empty rooms" in community. How many of you know one or more homes which aren't fully utilized? How can we leverage this available "housing" which represents incredible community vacancy? Doesn't need us to build new stuff, because it's already here!

Also.... rather than the almost impossible lift of building more rental housing, how about a fund to assist folks with home ownership, which in this market can actually be less than renting... EVEN though the market is super hot. For example, there are homes in Nashua (not many) in the \$250-300K range, which is actually more affordable than rentals!

Work on “hearts and minds” difference re: the stigma of Section 8 vouchers, and the perceptions that many folks have about the “types of people” who come with those vouchers.

How much scope is there for the city to consider renovating or repurposing a lot of the un-utilized commercial properties? Can't the city put energy and money into repurposing some of these properties:

Elm Street Middle School, Daniel Webster College.

Rabbi Jon encouraged making suggestions on the Imagine Nashua website re:
Aron suggested reaching out to your local Alderman and ask them what their stances are on Affordable Housing
Insist to our town and state legislators that planning Affordable Housing must be part of Nashua's Master Plan.

Pam Wellman (Executive Director of Family Promise) suggested that Family Promise and other Executive Directors of housing nonprofits in greater Nashua should speak at future meetings as they're part of the resolution, and can bring more information and further conversations.

Questions asked by small groups:

What seems to be the most likely/quickest solution to increase affordable housing?

It's not only about building; refurbishing, repurposing, visioning --all require capital and vision.

Raising and allocating a significant amount of money is a crucial beginning.

Many of the issues are complex, especially when we're talking about 1,000 units over the next 10 years

Pay attention to Planning and Zoning Boards and their activities; work in the neighborhoods where proposed projects and development are being opposed by those afraid of losing market value of their personal property.

YIMBY movement: opposes NIMBY--YES in My Backyard... write to decision makers and show up at meetings.

Rev. Sally noted that she expected resistance from town policy makers, legislators, and politicians-- but has been pleasantly surprised to discover that they're open to the conversation. Just need our faith and other communities to be sure to advocate for the issue and make it clear that we're invested in following through and encouraging them to making this a priority.

imagine@nashuanh.gov

Everyone should support the statewide advocacy work of Housing Action NH:

<https://housingactionnh.org/>

If you'd like to be on a local e-mail list and/or to be part of the biweekly groups, email me at rabbijon@tbanashua.org

NAIC BUSINESS

- **NAIC Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer bank account balances – Main: \$2558.87, CropWalk: \$1353.77, Choir: \$811.75

- June meeting will consist of a look at what we've accomplished across the past year, as well as looking forward
- Other Announcements:
 - Meg Hamm: May 11 at 7:30 Christian Science Church is hosting a program: "The How, Why, and Wonder of Spiritual Healing"
 - Mike Apfelberg: Share our "Roll Up Your Sleeve, Nashua" video with EVERYBODY you can! <https://youtu.be/qTCGzFXRTR8>
 - Nonny Egbuonu: shared that she's celebrating the arrival of twin great-grandchildren.
- Also, Public Health has a clinic in Brookline on Friday open to anybody over 18 for J&J vaccine!

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Tanya Stormo Rasmussen
NAIC Secretary