MEETING NOTES SAFE ANDHEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS – WORKING GROUP

DECEMBER 18, 2012:

It was requested that all the meetings be listed on the agendas for each meeting.

Parking – if members of the group have any issues, please see DZ

Departments are doing ongoing work out in the field. Reports on their activity regarding complaints/violations tracking are on SB or individual Department's websites.

DZ noted that discussion during the last two meetings, indicated that the group has decided to front load discussion around the rental regulations and to focus on the issue of 4 unrelated at a later date.

Janet Keller discussed her request to hire an outside consultant to work with the group. Members of the group discussed the merits of hiring an outside consultant and decided to table that decision until later. DZ argued that we have the expertise already represented in the experience of the members of the group and our own Town Counsel. It was suggested to have the consultant review the final product, perhaps via email.

The group discussed the two lists that SOK developed in an effort to clearly define the SHNWG's goals for the regulations: Why are we doing this? What do we want a permit to mean? After going through the lists and discussing changes and additions to the list, SOK indicated that she would bring an amended list to the next meeting for further discussion.

During discussion about permit non-renewal or revocation, Steve W asked if all rental units – including large apt complexes were going to be required to get permits. SOK responded that this group is starting with the premise that we are now going to require permits to rent properties in Amherst. Inspections, fees, etc. will be the "how" a person gets a permit.

During the discussion of the "What do we want a permit to mean?" Pat Kamins indicated that he did not have the understanding that the group's goal was to develop a permitting system. He doesn't agree that the Town can tell a landlord/homeowner that they can't rent unless they have a permit. DZ reiterated what JT had said, in that this is a sequence of steps in a unit being approved for occupancy. From the first meeting on, that this has been on our documents – we are just now articulating this. Pat Kamins surprised that SOK said that it was already understood that we are definitely going to a permit process, didn't think that we had voted on that or had decided on that, although we had discussed that. He was encouraged by SOK saying that maybe we just need to help our gov officials with their things (making rentals/neighborhoods safe and healthy). He has very little problem with these – thinks we should regulate rentals and thinks that we already have a lot of regs in place He doesn't agree that the Town can tell him he can't rent unless he has a permit and is worried that the Town could decide not to issue him a permit or revoke his permit. Makes him uneasy.

More discussion followed about the need for permitting everyone and Ken thinks that it would be a rare thing for a permit not to be renewed, unless there was a problem. Without possibility of not renewing a permit, the Town loses a lot of enforcement ability. Doesn't think loans would be difficult to get in a town were all rentals are requied to have permits. Better neighborhoods as a result of regulations and permitting and is a win all the way around.

Steve W also has a problem with large complexes being required to have permits. He is worried about the expense, since they already have to meet very strict requirements set by the State. He suggested that all rentals be managed by a management company.

DZ noted that and will consider it during discussion of the "what" and the "how" of it.

SOK we all agree with the concept of the first list, but what about the 2nd list? If we remove the title and skip the second to last bullet – do you disagree with any of the other bullets? Not talking about the "how" yet, just the "why." At the end of the day, once we have regulations, the goal of this group is to have the properties comply with this list (or finished list). Can you agree with that list?

SW I agree with the goals.

Sandy suggested changing the title to: What are the expected outcomes of rental registration?

DZ - important to circle back to TM charge and reason why we are all here. In large part we are here because the community is responding to problems that they have identified that they have brought forward to the SB, TM, PB, ZBA. We need to address these issues. TM wants to know what additional tools are needed to address all the" whys" on this page. We have a problem and our existing system is not working. We staff & SHNWG have looked at other programs there are more comprehensive programs out there that work are working much better than system we have in Amherst. We need a comprehensive program that brings all the best pieces of what we currently have and what other communities are using together.

SOK - Other part of the charge is not to be onerous or punitive, which is a critical thing to keep in mind when going through this.

SOK - Pat, are there things about this list (the "what list") that you disagree with?

PK – No, it's exactly why I am here – why we are making our neighborhoods healthier, why we are making them better. Noted that we need to add tenant responsibilities and that we will have more discussion about the how we are going to accomplish of this later on.

End of the day list – Permit fees will be left off, we all agree that permitting will be part of the how list.

SOK – confirmed that the group agrees that we want regulated/compliant properties to meet all these bullets.

Public Comment