

Senior Housing Work Group  
City of Oneonta Housing Commission  
1 November 2022 Meeting  
Draft Meeting Notes

Present: Nicole Blanchard, Bob Brzozowski, Ellen Fallin, Peter Friedman, Tamie Reed, Andrea Ronovech

Absent: Angie Eichler, Rachel Jessup

The meeting began at 7:05 PM.

Tamie, director of the Otsego County Office for the Aging, introduced herself and met the other subgroup members present.

Nicole distributed the September meeting notes and the meeting's agenda.

The September meeting notes were reviewed and accepted without changes.

Bob summarized the October meeting of the Housing Commission, including the significant progress of the Refugee Resettlement work group, that there will be new CFA period for grant apps in May, that all groups are interested in demographic data, that efforts are in the works for a method of information sharing, and that tours of the Lofts on Dietz and the Ford on Main will be planned for the commission.

We then began a wide-ranging discussion of goals, priorities, and next steps.

We spoke about the housing issues and problems in the city and the rest of the county. Ellen suggested a focus group meeting to find what seniors are looking for.

Nicole said that there is talk of starting a maintenance program that would help seniors stay in their homes. SUNY Oneonta has expressed interest in having student volunteers be part of this program. Having a community greenhouse would help seniors and others with home gardening efforts.

Tamie said that the Council for the Aging is putting funds into programs that will assist seniors to age in place. Bob suggested that we see if Habitat for Humanity has or would consider homes that are purpose-built for seniors. He will follow up with Bruce Downie of Habitat.

Tamie and Bob spoke of the Village to Village network and the Beacon Hill Village model for helping seniors age in place. Tamie will look into the Village to Village project in Ithaca.

We spoke briefly about generational home sharing. Tamie will look into it, but feels that it's not something that will come quickly.

Peter said that the day is coming when he can no longer maintain his large home. This led to a discussion about off-campus student housing units becoming available with the SUNY system reducing campus enrollment because of changing demographics, more online instruction, and the financial need to move students back to campus residences. Bob suggested that single family private homes might be turned into duplexes to assist seniors who wish to age in place.

Tamie and Nicole said there are talks about having a downtown Senior Center.

Andrea brought about open spaces in malls, and Tamie said that nationwide some malls are being converted to senior housing.

We all agree that many seniors value walkability to shopping and restaurants and available public transportation to health care, etc., and that Oneonta is in a good position to offer these services. Peter reminded us that there will be more downtown housing if the project on the site of Ford Sales comes to fruition.

The discussion moved back to the focus group meeting. We are looking at a focus group meeting in January. Nicole asked that we send our thoughts to her on topics and takeaways by November 15.

Our next meeting is scheduled for 6 PM on Tuesday December 6. Nicole will confirm with the City Clerk's office on availability to meet the first Tuesday of the month. She will also see if at least one of the doors to City Hall can be unlocked for us prior to the meeting times!

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Meeting notes taken by Bob.