

Town of Otis
Planning Board Meeting Minutes October 20, 2025

Call to order 7:00 PM

- Roll Call:
Mark Anthony-Chair
Hal Kobrin
Ross Knowles
Gordon Middleton
John Fletcher

- Approval of August 11, 2025 minutes
Hal motion to accept, John second, all in favor.
- Discussion on Seasonal Community Designation
 - median income used for affordable housing is based on state wide data not Berkshire County
 - affordable vs attainable housing
 - review of seasonal community draft regulations
 - revitalization is considering recommending a housing authority in Otis to review housing in town
 - town owns a large amount of land that could be developed it just costs money
 - option to have a trust that manages an inventory of property and such
 - Hal, biggest problem with infrastructure is space for water and septic and it is an issue on non-conforming lots
Building a well and septic is costly which immediately makes building housing not affordable
 - Hal, goal is to incentivize people to create housing inventory
 - many things in this do not fit for rural communities like Otis
 - Ross, taxpayers should not pay for people to have housing, people should work for their own houses and not put it on the taxpayers. Does not support subsidized housing for any reason.
 - Stacy, will be a concern when our community businesses and gas station employees cannot afford to live here, and then our businesses will close because they cannot find employees
 - Ross, government intervention will cause cost to go up

- Stacy, some of the provisions in this will allow us to increase taxes for second homeowners

-Ross, if you want to lower the cost of housing you should lower the cost of lumber

-Hal, the program would require housing to be sold at an affordable rate

-Stacy, the state has set aside a pot of money to be put toward this, do we want the money to come to our community or go somewhere else, the money is designated for affordable housing in seasonal communities, we can get some of that money

-Hypothetical, town could donate land for a developer to build, the donation of the land would be the incentive for the developer which would allow them to afford to build affordable housing, while the town would be donating land it would gain the housing inventory and tax revenue from a property that is not currently getting any tax money now

-Ross, Otis doesn't look different now than it did 50 years ago, except the houses on the reservoir that have been rebuilt,

-Mark, Short Term Rental bylaws have been passed over a year ago and no registration is set up yet

-Hal, a town without enough full-time residents can hurt a town

-Stacy, 50 years ago the houses in town were affordable

-Stacy, businesses number one concern is not having enough workers

-Mark, affordable housing can also be apartments, not just single-family homes

-Ross, why would we want the government to interfere with the free market, if housing is not there now there is a reason for it

-Hal, we need the incentive for housing that is needed to be available

-Ross, infrastructure is not private housing

-Hal, housing inventory is needed for a community to survive, we know housing is an issue, this program is one way the state is trying to address the housing issue, it is not an easy problem to solve

-Mark, what is everyone's opinion right now on accepting the seasonal housing designation

-Ross, think we should delay the decision

-Hal, the legislation is so confusing as is, and yes you can accept later or accept and then back out

-Ross, does not support the government getting involved in private housing and does not think we should take taxpayer money

-Stacy, reminds us the taxpayer money is already set aside for this purpose, we are just deciding if our community wants to use some of it or not, we are supposed to have 10% of our housing stock affordable

-Mark, aside from the discussion on affordable housing is there anything in this that hurts current residents in the seasonal community designation?

-Public Comment, we have a cottage that has been in the family for years and next generation most likely cannot afford to keep it in the family, because of this they may have to sell their cottage

-Mark, in this example it would likely be sold to a second homeowner and it would likely be rebuilt

-Stacy, only thing people are concerned about is the option to build on non-conforming lots which would lead to too much density,

-Hal, it gives the town the option for this, but we can create our own rules around this, we do not have to allow this as a town if we don't want to, also the requirement for water and sewer limit that already

-Mark, concerned about the tiny homes

-Hal, do not have any concerns with accepting seasonal community designation because this is just a framework that we can use as we choose and we have the option to back out if needed, want more information on how it will all work and the guidelines on how the legislation will be applied

-Mark, reminder any bylaw change would have to go through the planning board and be approved by the town anyway

-John, Egremont is a similar size town as Otis and they are doing a lot with this seasonal community stuff, may be beneficial to discuss with them what they are doing

-Mark, will invite Mary from the Egremont planning board to come to our meeting next month

-Stacy, 'Construct', affordable housing developers can come present what they do in terms of developing affordable housing, the rent and manage their own units. This is one example of how affordable housing can be done

- Any other business old or new.
- Mark motion to adjourn 8:35 PM, Hal Second, All in favor.