

**COMMITTEE ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE**  
**Minutes of Meeting, May 7, 2009**  
**Employee Lounge, Mansfield Town Hall**

Members Present: Helen Koehn (Chair), Bruce Clouette, Denise Keane, David Morse, Steve Rhodes.

Staff Present: Mike Ninteau, Gregory Padick, Jim Hintz.

Meeting called to order at 7:40 p.m.

S. Rhodes agreed to serve as Recording Secretary.

The minutes of the April 8, 2009 meeting were approved, correcting the spelling of Steve Rhodes's name.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No members of the public were present.

J. Hintz noted that Committee member Dana White is graduating from UConn and has resigned from the Committee. The Committee agreed that J. Hintz may submit nominations of students for the vacant seat to Chair H. Koehn, who will forward to the Town's Committee on Committees. H. Koehn will write a letter of thanks to Dana White on behalf of the Committee for her service.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

H. Koehn has scanned documents on the definition of 'family' in zoning regulations and municipal ordinances on parking at residential rental properties. The documents will be placed on the Committee's web site and members should be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting.

**ACTION ITEMS**

6(a) Water testing provisions.

M. Ninteau recommended no change in the Town's water-testing requirements (memorandum, April 30, 2009, as distributed to the Committee). The Town does not have access to water-testing data beyond the information available in the existing permitting process. In previous discussion, the Committee was divided on whether the two-year testing provision should be shortened, extended, or eliminated. At the Committee's February 12 meeting, Rob Miller, Director of Health for the Eastern Highland Health District, recommended continuing the two-year cycle.

Discussion: Presently 1200 units require a rental certificate in Mansfield. The vast majority are served by public water systems or large wells that receive routine monitoring. Approximately 100-150 units – mostly single-family residences – fall under the current two-year testing requirement. There are provisions in place for prompt action should water-quality problems be spontaneously discovered in these units. D. Morse suggested that the recommendation of two years is too conservative and that the Committee seek additional professional opinions. B. Clouette said he is not impressed with testing as a protective or predictive procedure, and suggested the Town explore outreach efforts to landlords and tenants on water safety, noting that everyone wants housing to be safe but Town efforts to promote safety should be cost- and procedure-effective.

Action: B. Clouette moved to table further discussion of water testing. D. Morse second. Motion passed.

#### 6(b) Mansfield 20/20 vision points regarding housing.

Discussion: B. Clouette suggested that members divide up the action points to gather information and report back to the Committee. Much more information is needed on some of the steps, particularly 6 and 7. S. Rhodes noted that the public expects that these proposed Action Steps be individually reviewed and evaluated. Since the Committee's last meeting, B. Clouette reported to the Town Council that this Committee is willing to undertake review of the neighborhood preservation item discussed at the April 8 meeting. G. Padick noted that the Council expects to receive from the Committee the completed form that accompanied the Action Steps.

Action: H. Koehn will complete the form and submit to the Town Council. B. Clouette will take responsibility to research Action Points 6 and 7. S. Rhodes will take Points 8 and 9. D. Morse will take Point 2. The Committee agreed to delay consideration of Point 1 as a low priority, and to delete Action Points 4 and 5 since they propose action that falls outside the Town's legal taxing authority as defined by the State. Point 3 was illegible on the copies distributed to members, so M. Nintean will distribute a clear copy before the next meeting.

Discussion: D. Morse questioned why Point 2 would be necessary, in light of existing Town ordinances. S. Rhodes observed that the underlying question is whether the Town should rely on police officers or zoning/landlord-tenant procedures to control nuisance behavior. B. Clouette suggested that the Committee not take the language in Point 2 too literally, but rather agree to confront the problem and propose solutions. He noted that landlord initiative (or lack of initiative) is decisive in whether a rental property becomes a problem, and suggested we research best practices. H. Koehn asks that the Committee consider issues of affordable housing.

#### 6(c) Residential rental parking.

Discussion: M. Nintean noted that the Town receives many complaints from citizens about parking conditions at rental units in their neighborhoods. Any additional Town regulation of parking would require considerable expense for staffing and administration costs. B. Clouette asked if parking could be restricted to behind rental units. M. Nintean noted that it would be necessary to grandfather existing units if the Town did not wish to require existing units to incur substantial costs in reconfiguring parking arrangements. G. Padick noted that environmental concerns might prohibit parking relocation on individual sites, and that existing zoning laws exempt single-family houses. B. Clouette asked how parking could be effectively regulated as the ongoing pattern of conversions of single-family homes to rental units continues, if an ordinance could apply to new conversions only. S. Rhodes suggested the restriction apply to new construction of any single-family or rental unit. D. Morse was concerned that Section 302.8 Motor Vehicles as distributed would seem to unfairly prohibit individuals from working on their own automobiles on their property and suggested that the ordinance set an explicit time period, after which a vehicle would be in violation. M. Nintean noted that the ordinance is used for junk cars sitting for long periods and suggested that enforcement be discretionary to the professional enforcement staff rather than enacting a time period and incurring additional administrative costs monitoring individual vehicles. D. Morse stated that he favored a specified time period in spite of these concerns. J. Hintz brought to the Committee's attention existing problems with abandoned cars on rental property, where landlords have not taken steps to remove those abandoned vehicles.

#### 7. Future action items

- (a) H. Koehn asked Committee members to review the materials on definition of Family and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.
- (b) The Committee agreed to defer consideration of alcohol-server training to a later meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.