

**Quality of Life Committee, Town of New Lebanon  
Minutes for monthly meeting held via Zoom  
July 26, 2022**

**Present:** Marianna Anthonisen, Bob Gilson, Sharon Powers, Josh Young

Marianna Anthonisen called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

Marianna Anthonisen asked for an approval of the April 19<sup>th</sup>, May 26, and June 19 minutes. Marianna moved to approve the minutes. Sharon Powers seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Discussion:**

**Healthcare:** Marianna read Tistrya Houghtling's notes from the July 26 agenda: "Collaboration with Rae Gilson and LV Health Assembly for health awareness public info sessions - Rae has been working with Steve Abramson of the BEDC on a targeted marketing strategy - in their preliminary discussions, it became clear that health care businesses of all kinds needed to be targeted to bring to New Lebanon - I connected them with the Lebanon Valley Health Assembly and through that meeting came the idea of having a few public info sessions with doctors from the Lebanon Valley Health Assembly focusing on one topic per meeting (Lyme Disease, COVID, etc.) - then we discussed how we could have a table with pamphlets and brochures on all the health access in NL (Everhome, county mental health, online doctor visits, etc.) - One of the tasks the quality of life committee has from the comprehensive plan is to increase distribution of information to residents on healthcare access." Sharon Powers and Bob Gilson volunteered to be helpful. Sharon said that she has attended this kind of session in the past, and it's helpful to give people paper and pens to ask written questions to spare embarrassment.

Bob Gilson added that he and Rae had dinner with David Himmelstein and Stephanie Woolhandler (two nationally recognized healthcare researchers who live in NL,) the night before. *They suggested that the first thing the Town would need to do to attract healthcare services is to do a needs assessment.* Bob had mentioned our relationship with Cornell, and they said they have colleagues at SUNY Albany, and Rockefeller University who might be helpful. They also said that we should focus on finding a hospital affiliated provider, because most for profit providers don't take insurance.

**Housing:** In the last meeting Bob Gilson spoke about a HUD program for Urban Homesteading from the 1970s & 1980s and wondered if we could create a related model for rural housing. The HUD guidelines are 350 pages, but the basics are low to moderate families apply to purchase derelict homes for a low price with an agreement to renovate the home to code and live in it for at least 5 years. The town would hold a secondary lien to discourage flipping. He suggested that it might be interesting for us to try to create a similar model for New Lebanon.

Gilson spoke with Al Bellenchia, CEO of Hudson Habitat for Humanity. Al said that Habitat builds one home every 1-2 years. The average cost is about \$300,000 and Habitat subsidizes about \$150,000. Applicants must qualify for a mortgage. Habitat subsidizes the mortgage to retain control of the property. Moving forward they are going to focus on multi-family units to have more impact. They try to build passive solar homes for energy efficiency. They tried building LEED homes, but clients had difficulty managing the technology. *Al said our first step is to create an inventory of opportunities – to identify vacant homes or land.* He is willing to work with us.

Sharon Powers said that she had seen really beautiful cluster housing in a rural setting. Josh Young said that he delivers groceries to a nice, low income housing senior complex in West Stockbridge. He said that if we created low income senior housing, their homes might become vacant, proving affordable housing opportunities for young working families.

Josh Young said that he has been looking into funding, and that the USDA has a program that provides \$16 million nationally in funding for rural housing upgrades. Bob Gilson said that there is also funding from New York State under the same office that the downtown revitalization grants are from. The key to funding is doing the research, creating a plan, lining up stake holders, and developing a compelling narrative. Each funder will have different expectations, the key is adjusting the narrative to meet the specific parameter of each agency. We will also need a political advocate.

The next Quality of Life meeting, scheduled for August 24 at 4:00 pm, will be held in person.

Josh moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:59 pm. Sharon seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted: Bob Gilson