

## **HOUSING SMART COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**April 27, 2026**

Call to Order - 6:10

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call - Names of members (Write Absent or Present)

- Sara Bayer - absent
- Philip Mones - present
- Sophie Grant - present
- Vickie Starr - present
- Deb Dolan - present

### **HOUSEKEEPING:**

Vickie started off by noting that the May committee meeting falls on Memorial Day weekend, so an alternative date is needed. After conferring with Joyce Grant, the options were Tuesday, May 19, or Tuesday May 26. The group chose Tues May 19 @ 6pm.

Vickie also shared that Ulster County's Planning Dept, which oversees the Housing Smart Communities Initiative, was hosting a conference for all of the towns participating in the UC Housing Smart program, and that all committee members were invited to join. The event will be on Friday, May 15, 11am - 2pm.

### **NEWS - Skyrise Apts:**

Vickie updated the group about our efforts to acquire the Skyrise Apts, recapping that in fall of 2025 the Skyrise Apts. property, located on Ava Maria Drive in Phoenicia, was put on the market for sale after being run as naturally occurring affordable housing for decades (with rents averaging around 30% AMI). At the time, 3 members of the housing committee – Deb Dolan, Phil Mones and Vickie Starr - began exploring the potential for members of the community to acquire the property in order to maintain its status as affordable housing. These 3, with the help of an outside financial advisor, determined how much we thought we could offer the sellers to purchase the property without needing to raise any of the current rents, and also allowing for roughly \$350k in upfront capital improvements to address some health and safety issues. Unfortunately, the sellers of this property had accepted another offer, and we most likely would not be able to acquire the property after all.

Deb Dolan, who acted in her capacity as a realtor to engage with the sellers agent during the 6-month exploratory process, explained that while our team had some very positive conversations with the sellers, who seemed to appreciate our efforts, in the end the amount of money we would have been able to offer did not align with the amount they wanted to receive. It was also noted that this opportunity could reappear if the people who are currently planning to buy it are not able to close on it.

**NEWS - Shandaken Village Apts:**

Vickie also updated the committee that Joyce Grant, our town clerk, had flagged her on some health and safety concerns some of the tenants at this senior living center were having, and their concerns that the landlord has not been responsive to their complaints.

Sophie Grant identified a need for our community to find more ways to support our seniors who are having housing issues, also flagging the risk of deed theft. It was agreed that we will consider ideas for how we can be part of a solution around this in future meeting discussions.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

After all of the recaps of ongoing work, the committee turned to a discussion of the comp plan draft, and a lively conversation ensued.

Roy Dignes began by emphasizing how important it is for the comp plan to be as broad as possible, so as to allow the town's leadership more flexibility when pursuing issues and concerns that affect our community, especially around updating our zoning code to allow for more housing and economic development.

Phil Mones noted that we also need to take a strong position in support of economic development, and creating more economic opportunities for our residents. Others on the committee agreed, noting that creating more housing and creating more jobs and economic opportunities should go hand in hand as we work to reverse our population decline and strive to increase our tax base in the hopes of keeping taxes affordable while generating more funding for our town to pay for all the services our town needs, and to accomplish the work our town government has been mandated to do.

Roy Dignes also noted that, in his view, the current comp plan draft focuses too much on Phoenicia and Pine Hill, with very little mention of the other 10 hamlets. Vickie added that this was especially notable considering that Big Indian— possibly the least developed of the 12 hamlets — is home to 2 hotels, 2 restaurants, 1 dive bar and the Full Moon Resort (a wedding venue). She also noted that most people who live in Big Indian seem happy to have these businesses in the hamlet, providing dining options and other activities and services that the locals can also take advantage of.

Last but not least, everyone at the meeting agreed that while we all care deeply about protecting our greenways and waterways, the comp plan places too much emphasis on conserving green space and not cutting down trees belies the fact that more than 50% of the land in Shandaken is already untouched by human development due to our location within the Catskill Park, as is already severely restricted on where we can develop more housing due to flood zones and steep inclines covering much of the land in our town.

Motion to close the meeting made by Deb Dolan at 7:40pm. Motion carried.

Minutes taken by Vickie Starr.

The next Housing Smart Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 19 @ 6pm @ Shandaken Town Hall.