

**Vashon-Maury Community Council (V-MCC) Affordable Housing Committee
Minutes 09/20/2023, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm, via Zoom Meeting**

Access recorded meeting via the following, using Passcode: 66ps%R*F
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/YTvZ6n_AAA7h1QIO-fp1p9ZzjXT2FB4h5nerRN8Pdinc7NddrPOoLnCGjP6EZf7t.SXKEhdI0iGJVnS4b

It can also be found on the V-MCC's YouTube channel here:
<https://www.youtube.com/@vashon-maurycommunity3890>

Minutes Drafted by Art Chippendale

Attendees:

**Morgan Brown, Committee Chair
Diane Emerson, V-MCC Board, President*
Terry Sullivan
David Vogel
Amy Drayer
Coco Carson-Rohe
Linda Fox
Art Chippendale agreed to keep minutes.**

Guests:

Bruce Haulman, Vashon History Museum

Welcome.

6:30 PM - Diane and Morgan opened by asking for someone to take minutes

Agenda.

**Morgan provided a brief review of the Agenda
Announced the Housing Forum on October 3 at VCA**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes from Sept 13.
Minutes were approved with no objections.**

I. Agenda Discussion Topics:

A. Presentation by Guest Speaker Bruce Haulman on the history of Vashon Island and town Housing,

- 1. Bruce began by showing Vashon population changes from “pre-contact” Indigenous period (probably 10-12K) was close to present day Vashon. But their numbers were reduced by a series of plagues long before the removal of the s̄w̄əb̄ab̄š̄ (“Swiftwater People”) by and their imprisonment on Fox Island.**

The rapid early growth of settlers from 1880 (aprox. 100), to 1900 (944), was followed by a big jump of 157% to 2,423 in 1910, then

slow growth until 1930 and even slower growth during the depression until 1940.

WWII brought an increase due to national defense spending, and an even faster rise during the post war years, with a rapid increase in Puget Sound industry in general as well as in Vashon, where the pop. more than doubled over 40 years from 1950 (4,289) to 1990 (9,309),

Each change in Vashon's population generally mirrored the rise and fall of economic opportunities in Puget Sound, culminating in the steady gentrification of Vashon from 1990 to 2020 (pop. 11,055)

2. Vashon housing has always been diverse, Native peoples lived in large and small communal "long-houses" or in single family "pit-houses. After American settlers moved here, the early Vashon economy late 1800s onwards was largely an "exchange Economy." There was not a lot of cash. So, housing was mostly family housing extended to farm workers or those in other industries, or workers living in bunk-houses, logging camps etc.
3. Arrival of Railroad in Tacoma (1873) and Seattle (1888) fueled Logging, Fishing, Farming & Mining. Mining on Vashon was for Gravel and Clay as construction materials. The economy begins to shift to a Wage-Worker economy to meet industry demand.
4. But the work changes; Salmon fishing peaked in 1914. Vashon's last major clearcuts took place in 1915. Vashon bricks shipped by boat can no longer compete with those shipped from land based yards.
5. As work changed, the work force of mostly laborers moved away from Vashon as does the demand for "workforce" housing.
6. Housing had become more stratified as managers and business owners could afford to build larger nicer homes. (ie: Piano Row in Dockton)
7. Farming became the largest employer, particularly Strawberry farming, and brought with it seasonal migrant pickers and provisional cheap substandard housing. This continued through the 1930's and 40's.
8. Then came the post war Baby Boom and the "Professionalization of Vashon." Boeing Engineers and others commuted in large numbers to and from the Island attracted by the rural lifestyle. With their educated mindset they begin to introduce Planning. In 1963-1964 Islanders came together to create Vashon's first Town

Plan through a series of community meetings called “Operation Jigsaw.”

That plan continues to be revised today.

- 9. At about the same time Vashon Agriculture began to disappear. The last Strawberry Harvest was at the Matsuta farm in 1985.**
- 10. The loss of farming presented an opportunity for young artists to buy or rent farms or farm houses very cheaply which led to the development of several “artist communes.” Affordable housing was available throughout the 60’s. Then with the Boeing Bust in the 70’s, many of those engineers left for jobs elsewhere, leaving a greater supply of homes.**
- 11. The OPEC Oil Crisis 1973-74 greatly reduced the availability of gas and oil, driving up the cost of commuting by car and ferry. Again, it’s forcing a change onto Vashon.**
- 12. In the 80’s, all these social and cultural changes brought about a shortage of affordable housing. In response, Vashon Household was formed in 1989.**
- 13. Meanwhile, Commuting became easier with the emergence of Issaquah Class ferries and Passenger Ferries which greatly increased capacity, saving commuters' wait times.**
- 14. In the 1990’s this helped to bring on a long period of island “gentrification” in which housing prices continue to rise. The first million dollar home sale happened in 1997.**
- 15. In 2008 The median housing price on Vashon was \$537K. That was at the peak house prices before the great recession. Four years later it was \$337K. But in a recession, even that price was out of reach of many.**
- 16. Vashon Household began investigating the housing need and locating funding in the 1990s and went on to develop Co-Housing, Roseballen and Sunflower as well as providing low cost rental housing.**
- 17. The Covid epidemic from early 2020 until early 2023 wrought considerable economic dislocation. It has changed the nature of Vashon, the nature of the commute, the nature of work (more people working from home), and the nature of meetings, (more zoom and tele-meetings.) It also changed the perception of homebuyers who**

saw the benefits Vashon could offer. This has only accelerated gentrification.

18. Bruce pulled out some current real estate listings (Sept 1, 2023)
- a) 2 house listed under \$750K
 - b) 8 houses listed between \$750K and \$1 Million
 - c) 9 houses listed between \$1M and \$1.25 Million
 - d) 14 houses listed for over \$1.25 Million
- This is gentrification on steroids.

19. Bruce wrapped up with a quick overview of the story of how housing on Vashon has changed over time, and concluded with the maxim: “This is just a story, not the story.” Then opened the meeting to questions.

II. Q&A

1. Linda F: “How do you see Vashon going forward?”
 - a) Bruce: I don’t see the trajectory changing much. But the efforts of the people here could have an effect on the components of that trajectory.
2. Art C: “Thinking about how change happens. One aspect is that money follows the housing market and the housing market follows the money. Vashon lost its economic engines when K2 and SBC left the island. But property owners continue to ask for top dollar from renters and small businesses and we have to figure out how to adapt to that.”
3. Terry S: “The arts movement was the beginning of the end. As art and entertainment grew we became a destination for people with a lot of money.”
 - a) Bruce: “It’s classic gentrification. As people in low cost areas bring attract artists and cafes, it becomes more attractive to people with money and force those who created that community to move out.”
4. Amy D: “Do you know of any communities that have preceded us in this trajectory which you might have learned from them?”
 - a) Bruce: “You can look to places like Duvall, Issaquah, Kent and Snohomish were all similar to Vashon. But they became part of the urban sprawl. So, you have to look further to Winthrop etc.. But I don’t know of any place that has found the solution to what is happening with housing, because of the nature of private property. If you find some, let me know. I would like to update my book with some comparisons we can look to.”
5. David W: “Does this remind you Carmel? I think we should be looking to Government to subsidize affordable housing.”
6. Terry S: “We need to look into Land Trusts in the San Juans.”

- a) Bruce: “Places like the San Juans and Vail are being overwhelmed by Billionaires. Vashon is being overwhelmed by Millionaires. It’s a different dynamic.”
- 7. Art C: “What effect would public housing have on the prices of private property? Don’t you think it would keep prices down?”
 - a) Bruce: “When you look at Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard you see prices have continued to soar. But they have either brought in public housing solutions or must import all their labor. They’re able to maintain their community so it doesn’t simply become a place for the wealthy.”

III. Morgan gave a presentation with slides: “Housing Crisis on Vashon” (updated 09/07/23)

The presentation begins at the 59:00 minute mark of this Zoom Meeting
Please view the presentation using the Zoom link or Youtube link shown near the top of these minutes.

He then presented an educational video developed by Sightline Institute which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yzhk2qcyww&t=50s>

E. Committee Chair Opening

Morgan is stepping away from Chairing the Committee in order to focus on his other work. He had noted this in the meeting agenda.

Both Art Chippendale and Terry Sullivan announced their interest in leading the committee. Terry mentioned the idea of Co-Chairs and Art agreed. Art and Terry have worked together in advocacy groups and in committees and have known each other for many years.

Coco C proposed that she is willing to “hold that space” as she has taken courses in Intergroup Dialog and Facilitation.

The motion was made to install both Art and Terry as Co-Chairs was made, The Vote was unanimous.

8:27 PM Meeting adjourned

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, October 4, 6:30pm at the Land Trust Building and on Zoom.

Email Diane Emerson, DianeEmerson@yahoo.com to be added to the Affordable Housing Committee mailing list.