

THE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

1987 - 2012

The First Twenty-Five Years

Richard C. Sears

Washington, Connecticut

2014

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Table of Contents

Note from the Author	Page	1.
Founding of the Washington Community Housing Trust 1986 - 1989	Page	2.
Antecedents of Affordable Housing in Washington 1957 - 1984	Page	14.
Dodge Farm Apartments 1990 - 1995	Page	20.
Riverwoods Senior Housing 1992 - 2002	Page	30.
16 Church - Apartments in New Preston Village 2001 - 2005	Page	42.
Other WCHT Attempts to Create Affordable Housing	Page	60.
Housing Preservation Grant Program 1992 - 2005	Page	66.
Washington Community Housing Trust Timeline	Page	68.
WCHT Incorporators, Trustees and Board Presidents	Page	73.
Appendix I: New Preston Water Issue 2002 - 2004	Page	74.

THE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

The First Twenty-Five Years

A Note from the Author

In 1987 after more than a year of listening to the community describe the need for affordable housing, the clergy of Washington organized the Washington Community Housing Trust to “establish and maintain affordable housing in the Town of Washington for persons of modest means, while maintaining the historic and aesthetic qualities of the community. The corporation shall promote the general welfare of the community.”

For more than a quarter century, a cadre of committed volunteers has enlisted many others to faithfully carry out its mission. WCHT has created thirty-seven attractive, comfortable, affordable apartment units at Dodge Farms, Riverwoods and 16 Church Street. It has attracted more than \$1.3 million in State of Connecticut housing funds and nearly a half-million dollars in federal housing preservation money. WCHT also garnered community support by changing zoning laws to be more friendly to affordable housing and by raising more than two million private dollars to build homes that are aesthetically pleasing and welcome in their neighborhoods. Today WCHT is a strong, viable volunteer organization steadfast in its mission. Its apartments are professionally managed and all have waiting lists. At this writing, the trustees are avidly pursuing the inclusion of a lagging sector of Washington’s housing stock--that of affordable home ownership for persons of modest income.

This monograph is my attempt to capture the essence of the formative years of the Washington Community Housing Trust. I endeavor to explain its founding and its activities during the first quarter-century. Included are writings found in recorded minutes of the Board of Trustees, correspondence, newspaper articles, and personal recollections and commentary.

I am grateful for having labored side by side with many dedicated citizens of Washington, Connecticut who share a common vision of maintaining a diverse population in this New England town by creating and maintaining housing for persons of modest means and in keeping with the town’s historic and aesthetic character.

Richard C. Sears
April 2014
Washington, Connecticut

Washington Community Housing Trust Incorporators — 1987

- John Boyer
- Rev. John DeZinno
- Covington Hardee
- Rev. Erik Larsen
- Rev. Richard Sears
- Rev. David Simpson
- Rev. David Sundell

THE FOUNDING OF THE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

Earliest Activities 1986 - 1989

Under the banner of WASHINGTON CHURCHES AND CLERGY CONCERNED the clergymen of Salem Covenant Church, St. Andrew's Church, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, St. John's Church, First Congregational Church, New Preston Congregational Church sent a memo on March 12, 1986 to "educators, civic and community organizations, town officials, and all individuals concerned for a better Washington." The memo was an invitation to an all-town meeting entitled "Our Town, What's Up?" slated for April 14, 1986. About 60 people attended the forum at Salem Church, hosted by the clergy. Dee Goolsby, Town Social Worker, and Ann Marie White of the Visiting Nurses Association helped the group identify human needs in Washington. A number of issues were identified, but two rose to the top: low cost housing and transportation for the elderly and handicapped.



In the mid 1980's local housing prices were rising off the charts and people of moderate means were being squeezed or kept out of town. An article in The Washington Eagle newspaper entitled "Washington Hills a Gold Mine" chronicled the mid-decade land-rush. A real estate boom had peaked in 1981 where the average sales price of a Washington home soared to \$145,000, dropped to \$90,000 by 1984, but began a precipitous rise that within two years was back to the 1981 levels. Another newspaper article from October 1986 quotes a realtor as saying, 'Washington is still hot' and illustrating that with an example of a 37% rise in price in eight months. Washington real-estate broker Carolyn Klemm said she is "afraid the old-fashioned character of the town may be spoiled if present trends continue." The article continues: "As prices go on rising, there is some concern whether anyone but

the affluent will be able to live in Washington. If this is the case, the result would be an upsetting of the balanced community and loss of the local flavor which presently exists." "It's a shame," said Bill Hollingsworth of Realtech Realtors in Washington Depot. "They may be killing the goose that laid the golden egg." The mix of big city values and country real estate had created a land market gone wild in western Connecticut.

OUR REAL ESTATE ROLLERCOASTER: THE MARKET

Washington hills a gold mine

By Roger Aylward
STAFF REPORTER

A 26-acre piece of land on West Church Hill Road in Washington purchased for \$8,500 an acre in August, 1985, sold for \$11,700 per acre eight months later.

The 37-percent increase in price translates into a \$64,600 profit, minus broker fees, for the investor.

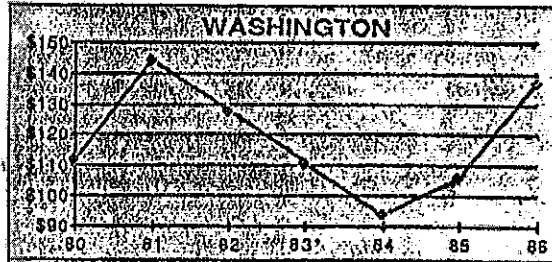
It's nice work if you can get it. And in Washington, it seems all one needs to make significant—and sometimes incredible—profits is the cash for a 10-percent down payment.

For instance, Bill Hollingsworth of Washington's Realtech office said he feels the property in Litchfield County was undervalued in the past and to now up where it should have been.

In 1978, the interest rates were high and businesses were shutting down. There was a lull in buying. When the interest rates dropped, the result was a lot of long-overdue buying and building, Hollingsworth said.

While some of the buying was from the south, said Hollingsworth, he said he believes the decline in interest rates caused a lot of "local switching."

This happens when families living in



This was the 1980's. Money was spewing out of Manhattan, spurting fountains of cash at Washington, an attractive target, two hours from Wall Street. With real estate costs in the city skyrocketing, people were surging into Litchfield County, scooping up country properties, knocking down historic farmhouses, erecting what locals called 'McMansions' (later derided as 'Starter Castles'). These 10,000 to 20,000 square foot behemoths were gauche testaments to conspicuous overconsumption. There was an upside to this boom as local contractors and related occupations reaped employment from the building and renovation boom. But locals were feeling pushed around and pushed out of their town. Stories abounded among long-time residents of hearing an out-of-towner mutter behind them, while standing in line at the Washington Market, "Why don't these locals shop during the week so I wouldn't have to wait in line so long." Working people's children could no longer afford to live in town. If older, long-time residents wanted to 'downsize' into a smaller home or apartment, they were pretty much out of luck. Housing prices quickly exploded 'out of reach' of Washington's workforce and long time residents.

January 20, 1987 Rev. Sears of the First Congregational Church invited five other clergy in town to bring parishioners from their churches to a meeting to begin addressing the affordable housing issue. He wrote: "Greetings to you, midwinter! Affordable housing—an outworn term but not an outworn concern of a good number of people in our parishes and in our community. At our "Night of Concern" town-wide forum last winter, housing and related issues topped the night in concern. The town government is not aggressively addressing the issue from the standpoint of senior citizen's concerns or of lower income persons. Can the churches of the community address the issues? I think we can and have a moral obligation to at least raise some of the problems and possible solutions.

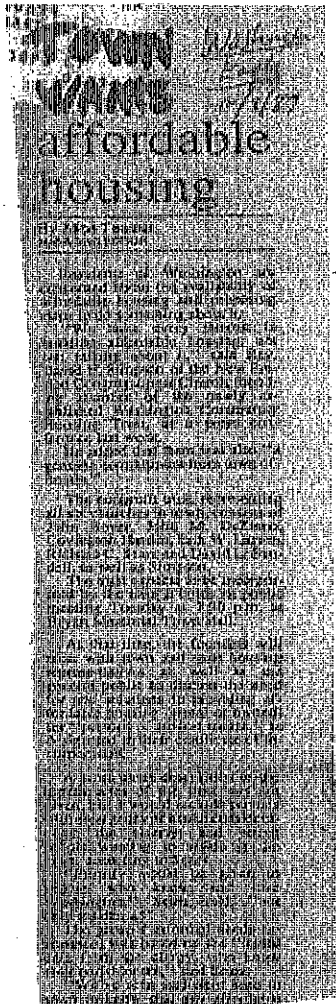
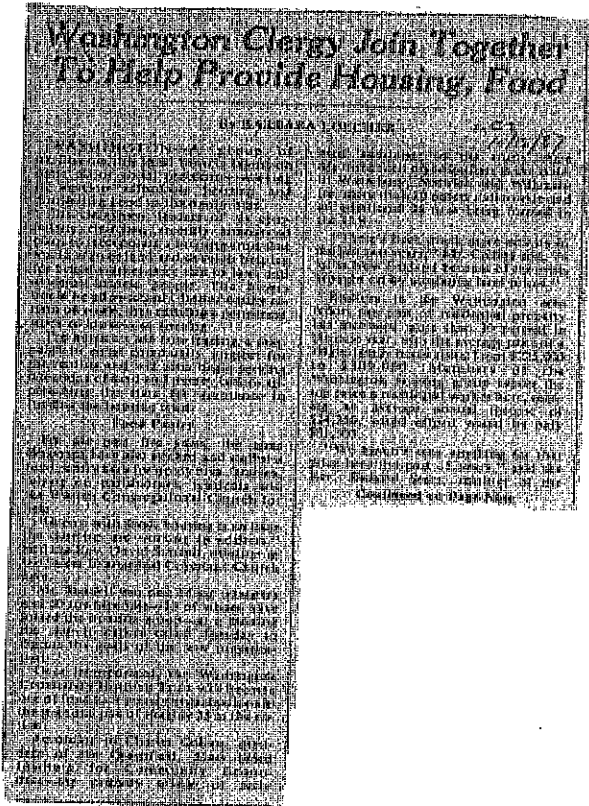
"As a beginning, would you and two or three persons from your parish who are deeply interested in identifying and discussing housing issues for Washington, be willing to come to a meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 26, in Judea Parish House?" The meeting was held with twelve people attending, including four clergypersons from five churches. This was the first focused conversation specifically addressing affordable housing.

The group decided that it needed someone experienced in organizing for affordable housing to share ideas about how to move ahead. It contacted the Institute for Community Economics in Greenfield, Massachusetts and found that Chuck Collins, Director of Technical Assistance, was interested sharing successful models of addressing the housing need. The group arranged for Mr. Collins to meet with interested citizens on April 9, 1987 at Salem Covenant Church. Thirty people attended that meeting, and momentum for affordable housing in Washington was building. The churches collaboratively funded Mr. Collins' visits to town.



Rev. Sears sent a letter to townspeople: "Dear Friend of Housing in Washington: After discussing some of the needs for housing, it seems to me several important issues arise: 1) The term "Affordable Housing" and Discussions around it seem to generate a lot of energy. When the energy is positive, things get done. However, when negative, the public imagination generates fear and anger. Therefore, the key to doing anything about increasing the number of available housing units, rental or for purchase, seems to best be done on a low-key, well thought out way. In order to not generate negative reaction, the group thought it best to keep a low profile at this point and work quietly. 2) Therefore, rather than to generate large ideas about multiple-family housing or other large solutions,

perhaps a strategy would be to organize around a small project or two. We decided to meet again. Mr. Chuck Collins, Director of Technical Assistance for the Institute of Community Economics (ICE) of Greenfield, Massachusetts will share ideas about organizing groups who are providing more housing units in their communities. Please mark your calendar and plan to be with us on April 9th."



Following that meeting, Rev. Sears sent a letter to a growing list of persons interested in the housing situation, inviting them to a community forum. "Dear Friend of Housing in Washington: More than thirty people were informed and inspired by Mr. Chuck Collins, Director of Technical Assistance for the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) on Thursday, April 9 as he shared ways of addressing housing concerns for people of our town. The overall feeling was that an organization should be developed so that specific needs may be addressed. He continued: "The model proposed is that of a Community Land Trust. A CLT is a community-based institution with an open membership and democratically elected board of trustees. As a nonprofit corporation, it is chartered in the state in which it is located. This democratically controlled, membership organization is set up to enable area resources - churches, town officials and commissions, businesses, property owners, those

seeking home ownership or rental units, philanthropists, government funds, etc. - to address the real needs of area residents for housing. The clergy of the town invite you to an information and organization meeting with Mr. Collins at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday June 2, at St. Andrew's Church, Route 202, Marbledale. After agreeing on a plan of action, committees will be formed."

The second meeting with Mr. Collins took place and momentum continued to build. A fledgling organizational structure was beginning to take shape. A small planning group met on June 2nd prior to a community forum with Mr. Collins at St. Andrew's Church in Marbledale that evening. Volunteers signed up to work in three task groups: 1) Legal Structure and Policy, 2) Site Acquisition and Finance, 3) Membership and Outreach.

In a memo to all who attended the June 2nd organizing meeting, Rev. Sears wrote: "Things are moving along nicely toward incorporation of a private, not for profit corporation. In order to build support and invite other people who might be interested in helping meet these needs, a public educational meeting will be held at the Town Hall after the Annual Town Meeting on Monday evening, October 5th. We will be inviting the press and the public to attend this meeting." He then asked David Simpson, John Allen, John Boyer, Erik Larsen and Estelle Bronson, who had been very active in the cause, to begin meeting as a Steering Committee and learn about the work of the three subcommittees prior to the public meeting. He noted that 'Jack Boyer is working on papers of incorporation and suggests that clergy of the town become the original incorporators."

Washington workers can't afford town, group's study says

7/31/87
Republican

By MARK BOSLET

WASHINGTON, Conn. — In a town where home prices routinely soar above \$200,000 and \$300,000, the \$80,000 house is pretty much a thing of the past.

But \$80,000 is about the largest mortgage the average school employee or municipal worker here can qualify for.

That's what resident John Boyer found out after conducting a survey of municipal employees, whose salaries are public record. Boyer is a member of a citizens' group trying to address the needs for affordable housing here.

Boyer took the pay levels of town employees, from school superintendent to road crew worker, and found the average salary to be \$24,000. According to Boyer, a bank would approve a mortgage of about \$80,000 for a client with that income.

Perhaps more than anything else

ken to homeowners willing to consider donating land or selling it at below-market rates for the effort.

Committee members — including First Selectman John A. Marsh, Selectman Alan J. Chapin and Zoning Commission Chairman John J. Allen Jr. — also began reviewing a list of town-owned properties with the hope that one might be appropriate for housing.

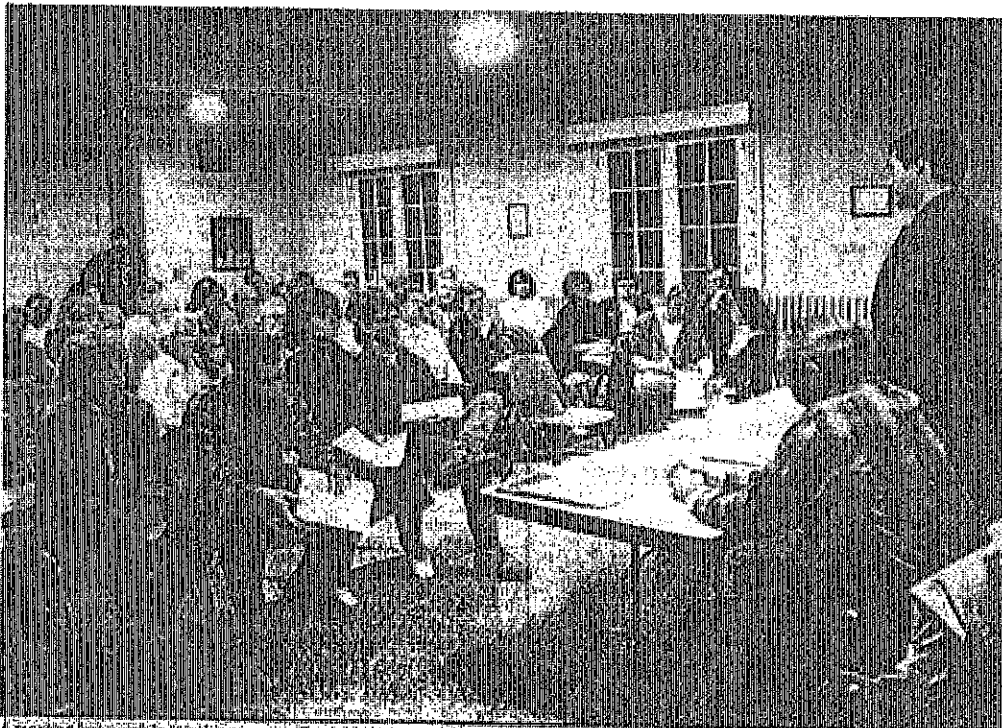
The town owns about 10 acres along the Shepaug River off Route 47, 13 acres around the Washington Primary School and 3 acres off Church Street in New Preston, Marsh told the gathering. Members said none seemed suitable for moderate-income housing at first glance, but that they would take closer looks.

Members also said they would evaluate the possibilities of converting an unused part of the primary school into living quarters.

They acknowledged that their of

Rev. Sears then invited the clergy of the town to an early September 1987 lunch meeting because "the sub-committees of people interested in affordable housing have started meeting over the summer. There seems to be significant enough energy to form a not for profit corporation called something like "The Washington Land Trust." Many communities have a similar non-profit corporation. To give credence and weight behind the desire to incorporate, it would be great if we, the clergy, would become the original incorporators." The clergy agreed to be founding incorporators of an affordable housing organization.

The organizers called a Public Meeting for Tuesday, October 13, 1987 at Bryan Memorial Town Hall. From a letter from Rev. Sears to "Friends of Housing in Washington" we learn: "Things are progressing nicely: Active Committees and task groups have met throughout the summer, gathering data and drafting reports. Contacts have been made and strengthened with the Washington Selectmen, the Northwest Council of Governments, and the State of Connecticut Department of Housing. The committees are ready to report on their activity and show the next action steps. You are invited and urged to attend a public meeting on October 13, 1987. People cannot make a home in papers and committees! The most important step is to find a piece of land or a facility to develop into comfortable, affordable homes... It looks like the private sector is the best place to look for a piece of property or a dwelling. Who and what do you know? As around. This non-profit housing trust can be the receiver or purchaser of such parcels. Come to the meeting expecting to be a charter member and help on one of the action committees. I look forward to seeing you there!"



A meeting held in the Bryan Memorial Town Hall on Tuesday, October 13, 1987, to discuss the formation of a housing trust.

Housing Trust Draws Interest and Support

In an October 28, 1987 letter to Chuck Collins of ICE, Rev. Sears related enthusiastically: "As you may or may not have heard, we are on a roll toward providing affordable housing in Washington! Thanks to your stimulating help in the past year and the efforts of a good number of dedicated volunteers, our public meeting of two weeks ago showed a strong interest and a positive direction to attack the problem. The day after the meeting where 60 people attended, all with positive interest, someone called and asked me, 'Where is your opposition?' I said that at this point we didn't have any but when we acquire our first site, someone will come out of the woodwork I am sure....To put it simply: I think we have done a lot of the right things to get grassroots and influential people in the town on board at an early date. In the crowd at the public meeting were not only young folks hoping for a home in the village but also wealthy land owners and residents who are eager to see some stability for working people of the town. Once again, we really appreciate your help and technical assistance."

4 — The Weekly STAR, October 19, 1987



Editorials

Washington's Housing Trust

The prospering towns in the lower Litchfield Hills are wrestling with a conundrum: How do you provide affordable housing alternatives for persons of low and moderate income, who have lived in town for years and now find that the real estate market is beyond their reach?

It is unrealistic to expect private developers to solve this riddle. They are in business to make money not to address social problems. Yet people of conscience are finding it increasingly difficult to simply ignore the problem and watch as families, some with long histories in town, have to pick up and leave.

A newly-organized non-profit group in Washington seems to have come up with a good approach to the problem. The Washington Community Housing Trust wants to acquire property, rehabilitate the houses on those properties or build new ones, and then lease some and sell others for as low as \$60,000 to \$80,000. To fend off speculators, the trust would retain title to the land itself.

The trust invited townspeople to a public meeting on its plans last week, and when the session convened on October 13 at the Bryan Memorial Town Hall, the meeting room was full. Some had come to inquire about finding an affordable place to live, others had come to inquire about procedures for selling or donating land to the trust. The meeting was clear evidence that the community was ready to respond to good ideas.

We encourage other towns to watch this experiment in Washington closely and to consider taking similar steps. The housing trust may not completely solve the affordable housing riddle, but it is the most encouraging development we have seen yet.

In January 1988 the Trust sent out a membership and fundraising letter: "Dear Friend, The Washington Community Housing Trust is now a legally incorporated entity registered with the Secretary of the State of Connecticut! We are pursuing tax-exempt status with the IRS. We held our organizational meeting on January 11, 1988 and the consent of the Incorporators elected John Boyer as President, Covington Hardee as Treasurer, Janet Smith as Secretary and Erik W. Larson, Phillips H. Payson, David E. Simpson, David Sundell, Diana Tagley and Richard Sears as additional Trustees. All of this is to say we are 'up and running' and need your help to carry on. The first thing you can do is send in your Membership Donation right away. Annual dues are \$10.00, but additional gifts are needed." More than 100 citizens joined WCHT the first year.

A February 1988 letter from Rev. Sears to Chuck Collins, ICE states: "As you can see, we are getting good press! As my article points out, however, we need to press ahead and get that first piece of land or 're-hab' building. We have an exciting dialogue going on between the town and Steep Rock Association (the local forever wild land trust) about a swap of town-owned land for a piece of Steep Rock's land. The Board of the land trust is very willing and able to help us. The local town government's leadership is, as you might imagine, quite lethargic and bound to the status quo. We are moving along quietly and firmly with our citizen's organization to move the mountains! Jack Boyer is doing a sterling job keeping the ball rolling. The Board of Directors is a good, solid, well-respected group of citizens. I believe at this point we have everything going in our favor for getting some action."



The Steep Rock property swap with the Town never materialized, but the dream about affordable housing did not die at this point. NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)—a constant companion of affordable housing initiative over WCHT's 25 years--raised its head for the first time, as neighbors on adjoining properties vocally opposed building apartments on a

very suitable property on a plateau above Blackville Road. The town effectively threw up a mythical roadblock when John Marsh, First Selectman, conjectured that perhaps the first 'traffic light in Washington' might have to be built on Blackville Road (Route 109) because of a possible sight-line issue for entering and exiting traffic to the driveway. The safety issue was never studied, the boogiemans of having a traffic light was enough dis-incentive to encourage town leadership to become 'lethargic' as the above letter suggests.

Waterbury Republican, Saturday, April 4, 1987

Washington clerics suggest turning Pavilion Hall

By MARK BOSLEY
WASHINGTON, Conn. — Clergymen here are talking about turning Pavilion Hall in New Preston into as many as six apartments for the elderly and young renters who can't afford to live in the town. The building, which was built in 1910, is in poor condition and still be there to "maintain the character of the village," he said. If that would not be possible, the clergy men said, they would look for another use for the building. At a meeting this month, board Alan J. Chapin said he was reticent but the board had "exhausted all

First WCHT Newsletter: In 1989, the Housing Trust published its first WCHT newsletter to town residents. In it the following articles appeared:

Origins of WCHT: Since 1985, clergy of the town invited citizen to make their desires about housing and other concerns known. A series of public meetings surfaced interest in developing affordable housing. Chuck Collins, Director of Technical Assistance, of the Institute for Community Economics of Greenfield, MA proposed the model of a "Community Land Trust" for as a structure to meet the need for affordable housing. With financial support from the churches, Mr. Collins' services were retained. A steering committee gathered further data about the real need for housing and made plans to form a non-profit community housing trust.

Subcommittees worked on 1) Legal Structure and Policy, 2) Site Acquisition and Finance, 3) Membership and Outreach. Finally, a "Report to the People" was presented at a public meeting at Bryan Memorial Town Hall on October 13, 1987. Rev. John DeZinno, Rev. Erik Larsen, Rev. David Sundell, Rev. David Simpson, Rev. Richard Sears, Mr. Covington Hardee and Mr. John Boyer signed a Certificate for Incorporation for the Washington Community Housing Trust, Inc. Mr. Boyer, having recently retired from a law practice, has provided critical and continuous leadership throughout the early life of the organization. (see article on Boyer)

Incorporation: In early November 1987, the State of Connecticut duly recognized the Washington Housing Trust as a non-profit organization to "establish and maintain affordable housing in the Town of Washington for persons of modest means, while maintaining the historic and aesthetic qualities of the community. The corporation shall promote the general welfare of the community..."

Organization: The original incorporators adopted by-laws and elected trustees and these officers: President: John Boyer, Treasurer: Covington Hardee, Secretary: Janet Smith, Trustees: Erik Larsen, Diana Tagley, Phillips Payson, Richard Sears, David Sundell, David Simpson.

Tax Exempt Status: In the fall of 1988 the Internal Revenue Service granted WCHT exemption from federal Income Taxes under section 501©3 of the tax code. A membership drive was launched in early 1988 and more than 100 people became founding members.

Real vs. Imagined Housing Needs: Realizing that any project which required State money and that the public would demand 'hard data', WCHT set out to establish the real need for 'affordable' housing in

Washington. A community survey was prepared and paid for by the Trust in early 1988. Out of 145 returns (8% of the total), 71 family/individual responses stated that they were in need of affordable housing. A significant number of responses showed families paying more than 30% of income for housing costs. Sixteen priority need cases were identified.

Which Way to Go? People the Trust are interested in helping are town residents and former residents, public and private employees working in Washington who are being squeezed out by increasing housing costs. Some people are content to rent a nice apartment and would like the assurance that prices will stay within reach. Others would like to settle into town by owning their own home. These two needs are addressed by WCHT. Most of the time and energy have focused on providing moderately priced rental housing. However, Assisted Home Ownership is a goal of WCHT:

- A. Assisted Home Ownership works like this: The chief detriment to owning a home in Washington for a moderate-income family is the price of land. If WCHT owns the land around a house and removes that price from the equation, a number of moderate-income persons could buy or build their home here. WCHT would hold title to the land and through deed restrictions would require the eligible family to sell their home when they move. Their selling price would be their purchasing price plus a limited build-up of equity. The land, held in trust, would be kept out of the transaction and another eligible family would be offered the house at a slightly appreciated price.
- B. Moderately Priced Rental Units: Primary energy has been focused on paving the way for an increase in apartments in town. A number of publically owned sites have been investigated: The old consolidated school in Washington Depot, land on the athletic fields behind Washington Primary School, land surrounding the Shepaug Middle/High School, Pavilion Hall and the Ball Field on Church Street in New Preston. None of these are currently yielding to the need for housing.

A number of privately owned parcels have been walked and studied by WCHT members. Several of these hold great potential for development into apartment locations. However, as of this date, WCHT has not pushed ahead with any of these because of two sites that have held the community's interest in and energy around moderately priced housing:

Steep Rock Association Swap: In the spring of 1988 the Trustees of Steep Rock Association offered 10+/- acres (behind Dobber's Restaurant) to the Town of Washington in trade for 10 acres between the Shepaug River and Route 47 in the Depot. WCHT, Steep Rock and the Town jointly paid to have the site soil tested for suitability for septic systems. It was found to be suitable for 15 apartments. However, the town's changeover to a new First Selectman (Alan Chapin), minor public opposition, and important questions about traffic access to the site put this project on WCHT's back burner.

Pine Lane Manor Residence Hotel: When this exciting piece of property came on the market, Jack Boyer and WCHT began negotiations for purchase with the Board of Selectmen, the State of Connecticut Department of Housing (seeking grants for acquisition and rehabilitation) and the current owners. Presently, a purchase price has been established and WCHT is pushing ahead with the dream of rehabilitating the under-populated hotel into 8+/- moderately priced apartments.

The Town Officials of Washington have been quite supportive and active in the housing cause. Recently, First Selectman Alan Chapin appointed a "Housing Partnership" to work with state officials, local business people, WCHT and others interested in housing. When the first 'partnership' project actually

gets in the works, the Department of Housing's incentives will mean real dollars flowing into Washington in the form of increased State aid for roads! (Hey, whatever it takes!)

Frontiers of Zoning: WCHT realized a huge roadblock early on its organizing for moderately priced housing: No matter how well-intentioned anyone was in providing for housing, zoning regulations didn't allow for multiple family dwellings anywhere in town. Since the best way to keep costs down is to increase the number of units on a given building site, the possibility of reaching our goals was tiny indeed until recently.

In a recently landmark decision, the Washington Zoning Commission amended its code to provide "the opportunity for Town or Non-profit sponsored affordable housing, single or multiple in suitable locations in any district" and subject to a number of conditions, including all the current health and sanitation conditions. The machinery of town government has helped pave the way for a solution to the housing problem!

The newsletter concluded with an appeal for the public to provide funds, land, a house and/or technical assistance to help provide affordable housing.

WCHT works to change Zoning Laws to Allow Affordable Housing: It became clear soon after organizing the Trust, that the Town's soil-based zoning made it impossible for higher density housing—one of the main impediments to encouraging affordable housing. John Allen, Chairman of the Zoning Commission and one of the early proponents of the formation of WCHT, was extremely helpful in the creation of Town of Washington Zoning Regulation 13.15 whose purpose is "to provide the opportunity for the Town or non-profit sponsored affordable housing, single or multiple, in suitable locations in any district, subject to (six) conditions." The ZC held a public hearing on December 12, 1988 and voted to adopt the new section on December 27th.

TOWNS NEWS

New zoning regs OK moderate income housing

By Bernardino Brody
Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON - Hoping to assist the town's elderly and needy families, the Zoning Commission unanimously adopted regulations Tuesday permitting moderate income housing in the town.

"I think it's an excellent step in the right direction," said Rev. David Simpson, a trustee for the Washington Community Housing Trust yesterday (Wednesday).

"The new housing regulations make it financially possible for the housing trust to develop housing on

"(This housing) would conform with the nature of the land and the architecture of the town."

land that might otherwise not be affordable housing land," Mr. Simpson continued.

"But (the housing) would conform to the nature of the land and the architecture of the town," he added.

The regulations would provide the opportunity for town or non-profit sponsored organizations to develop affordable housing, single or multiple, in suitable locations throughout the town.

According to the new regulations, each dwelling unit would be at least 550 square feet, would have its own outside access to the lot and be equipped with its own kitchen facility, bath and laundry service as well as meet the town's zoning regulations for the specific district.

The sewage disposal system would have to meet the requirements of the State Health Code and be ap-

proved by the town's health officer. Parking must be sufficient to accommodate the needs of the occupants.

The applicants would be either the town or a non-profit corporation that it established under the laws of Connecticut for the purpose of owning, managing, selling or managing affordable housing units.

"It's another step toward providing housing for people with moderate incomes. Hopefully (the new regulations) will help (the housing trust), which is working toward providing moderate income housing," Zoning Commission chairman John Allen said Wednesday.

The commission devised the regulations at the request of the housing trust which approached it in October to make it possible for the trust to approach the state with its housing proposals.

"We're now ready to take the next step," said Rev. Simpson. "We have several proposals pending, and we will be applying to the state."

"The Blackville Road site is still possible, and I believe we are going to be moving ahead with the Pope Lane Manor site on Route 207," Rev. Simpson said.

Rev. Simpson said the housing trust is delighted with the Zoning

Commission's efforts to revise its regulations and with the town's support.

The proposed regulations were approved by Trust Selectman Alva Chanin, the Planning Commission and residents who attended the public hearing Dec. 12.

But residents urged zoning officials to tighten the proposed regulations.

The commission referred its proposed regulations to commission attorney Thomas Dymk, who advised the adoption of the regulations a proposed at the Dec. 12 hearing.

The new regulations took effect on January 3, 1989 and have remained useful for creating affordable housing

13.15 Town of Washington or Non-Profit Sponsored Affordable Housing.

The purpose of this Section is to provide the opportunity for Town or non-profit sponsored affordable housing, single or multiple, in suitable locations in any district, subject to

the following conditions:

13.15.1 The applicant for this Special Permit shall be either the Town of Washington or a non-profit organization approved by the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Washington.

13.15.2 Each dwelling unit shall contain at least 550 square feet.

13.15.3 Each dwelling unit shall have its own outside access convenient to the parking area and vehicular and pedestrian access to the lot.

13.15.4 Each dwelling unit shall be equipped with its own kitchen facility, bath, and utility service.

13.15.5 The sewage disposal system shall meet the requirements of the State Health Code and shall be approved by the Town's Health Officer.

13.15.6 Parking must be sufficient to accommodate the needs of the occupants in the judgment of the Zoning Commission.

Zoning regulations..Version: April 20, 2009 Town of Washington Zoning Regulations Page 59

Second WCHT Newsletter: WCHT published a second newsletter in 1990 summarizing the history of WCHT and mentioning these sites and projects:

WCHT Board members have spent hundreds of hours in the past two years exploring possible sites for the development of moderate income apartments: These include the steep Rock property off Blackville Road, Pine Lane Manor Residence Hotel on Route 202, Wykeham Rise School, and several privately owned undeveloped pieces of property.

Currently the Board is working along three lines: The Trust is negotiating with the Women's Club of New Preston who are the trustees of the New Preston Community House to develop two small apartments on the second floor of that building. The first floor would remain in use as a community meeting space. So far the deliberations have been positive. (April 1990)

Secondly, in February of 1990 the Housing Trust joined with John Murren, owner of Quarry Ridge Condominiums on Mygatt Road, Marbledale, in an application to the State Department of Housing to finance the Trust's purchase of 7 condominiums. The plan calls for the trust to re-sell the unites to eligible families and rent any vacant ones pending sale.

Thirdly, the Board is negotiating with the owners of a 10 acre piece of undeveloped property which is soil tested and suitable for the development of 10 apartments and one or two single family homes. Plans are, if a reasonable price can be agreed upon, to seek Department of Housing money for acquisition and development of housing units.

From its earliest roots in a meeting of Washington's clergy in the spring of 1986, the Washington Community Housing Trust formed to flesh out the dream of housing that would be affordable for persons of modest means. Many volunteers held high the vision. They educated themselves, chose leaders, raised money and formed an organization to create opportunities for housing. In would be five more years and a lot of effort expended before fourteen families had brand new, affordable homes in which to live.

**ANTECEDENTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE TOWN OF
WASHINGTON, CONNECTICUT
1957 - 1984**

The Town of Washington had seen several initiatives over the years to address the housing needs of residents of modest means prior to the founding of the Washington Community Housing Trust in the late 1980's.

ELLSWORTH APARTMENTS: Following the devastating Flood of '55, Harry Van Sinderen's re-development of Washington Depot included his 1957 building of seven apartments for victims who lost their homes. This was the earliest charitable act in town to help persons of low income find housing they could afford. Wanting to attach these homes to a long-standing, permanent institution, he bequeathed them to Rumsey Hall School.



The Ellsworth Apartments on Bee Brook Road

A decade later, Rumsey Hall School wished to sell the apartments. In order to preserve the original intent of providing affordable housing in perpetuity, the school approached the First Congregational Church to see if it would be interested in ownership. A special Ad Hoc committee of Trustees reported in April 1976:

"It was the consensus of the Committee that the purpose and intent of these apartments since their beginning in 1957 was to provide low-income housing; that this intent has been continued by Rumsey Hall over the years; that the need for this type of housing was great in the town of Washington; that Shepaug Apartments had tried to meet this very need in the Town and failed when governmental restrictions had forced the Church to withdraw from its plans. After discussion and review, it is the recommendation of this Committee to

the Board of Trustees that the purchase of Ellsworth Apartments be considered by the Board, and that offer be made to Rumsey Hall School (if approved by a membership meeting of the Congregation) of no more than \$100,000."

Later that Spring the Rumsey Hall School Board of Directors voted unanimously to accept an \$80,000 offer from the church for the purchase of the apartments. The congregation soon approved the action and took title to the property in January 1977. Since that date, the church has owned and operated these seven apartments, offering affordable rates based on tenants' ability to pay. The original mission idea of Mr. Van Sinderen has been carried forward: to provide comfortable, safe, and affordable housing.

SHEPAUG APARTMENTS: In June of 1969, the First Congregational Church sponsored an effort by concerned church members and citizens to develop a senior housing complex on River Road in Washington Depot. Read about the attempt to create these Shepaug Apartments at the end of this chapter in excerpts from The Church on the Green: Beginning a Third Century by Richard Sears.

ZONING LAWS: In 1982, Washington First Selectman John Marsh urged the Zoning Commission to address housing needs for a diverse group of residents who, for various reasons, were unable to own or continue to own and maintain homes in Washington but wished to remain here. A study was commissioned, and in 1984 a consultant recommended that the code be amended to allow for more intensive land use and multifamily structures. This was done. However, a short time later, when several very large condominium projects were proposed for town, citizens rose up on their heels under the banner of 'preserving Washington's rural character.' Many people feared the small town feel would be destroyed by suburbanization. The Zoning Commission acted swiftly to shut down high-density housing. The town's strict soil based zoning laws effectively closed the gate to lower priced housing by disallowing more units per acre. Not until the Housing Trust petitioned the Zoning Commission to allow town government or not for profit developers to build higher density housing several years later, would affordable houses and apartments be possible in Washington.

Other housing opportunities that enable persons of middle income or lower to find housing without any organized effort include:

- Some larger homes and estates provided caretaker cottages of modest size and rent.
- Zoning laws allowed for attached or unattached accessory apartments. At one point in the 1990's regulations allowed for one attached and one unattached unit in addition to the main dwelling on a property. However, those fearing a threat to the town's rural character by 'high-density' development forced a roll-back to allow only one accessory apartment per residence.
- The town's independent schools provide another form of housing for moderate-income faculty and staff workers, both on and off campus.
- Some families in town have been able to give a parcel of buildable land to their children to build their houses.

- The First Congregational Church owns Woodruff House on the Green that provided five modest sized and priced apartments.
- Some home-owners share their homes with non-related individuals and families.

The 1970s in Washington

The Church's Concern for Affordable Housing

A Headline for the April 27, 1972, *New Milford Times* read: "Housing for Elderly Termed 'High Priority,'"

WASHINGTON--A housing project for the elderly planned for Washington Depot to be known as 'Shepaug Apartments' has been given a "high priority" rating by HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development). This was made known this past week by a member of the staff of United States Senator Lowell Weicker. In addition, it is anticipated that the processing of this project can be accomplished before the end of this month.

By the end of the same year, the Chairman of Shepaug Apartments, Incorporated's, Board of Directors, Dr. Jane Lockwood, declared: "I feel it would be appropriate if we changed the name of our Project from Shepaug Apartments, Incorporated to FRUSTRATION MANOR." In fact, the Shepaug Apartments never were built. What happened? The story of the church members' and town citizens' determination to make affordable housing available is an instructive and inspirational one. It tells of a community identifying an important social concern and a dogged determination to meet that need.

The story of Shepaug Apartments begins in June of 1969, with the filing of incorporation papers by the First Congregational Church of Washington as sponsor. The volunteer group, consisting primarily of members of the church, was led to believe that Government money would be readily forthcoming, and that the achievement of their ends would be relatively uncomplicated. Contrary to initial impressions, the group learned that anyone making application for federal grants and loans, especially for housing, found quite a different story.

Shepaug Apartments, named after the river which courses through the town, was formed as a nonprofit corporation whose purpose was

Excerpts below are from The Church on the Green: Beginning a Third Century

The Church on the Green: Beginning a Third Century

to provide principally but not exclusively for elderly families and elderly persons, on a non-profit basis, rental housing and related facilities and services specially designed to meet the physical, social and psychological needs of the elderly (persons 62 years of age or older), and to contribute to their health, security, happiness and usefulness in longer living. To plan, construct, operate, maintain and improve rental housing and related facilities and service for such persons.

The Corporation held regular meetings in pursuit of its goals. It drew heavily from the expertise of the Rev. Arthur Higgins of the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ. Its Directors were President Jane Lockwood, M.D., George Tenney, Alan Hearn, William Houldin, Jr., Helena Heinemann, Mrs. John Sutton, Dorothy Rochon, and Guy Worsley.

All possibilities were explored in its search for a suitable location for its 24 units of elderly housing. It had come to the attention of the group that a property near the Washington Green known as 'The Rocks,' and formerly owned by Mrs. Leonard Hammond, had been bequeathed to a trust. A letter to the Trustee from the Shepaug Apartments Corporation asked that consideration be given to the purchase of the property possibly as the basis for apartments for elderly people of the Town who were no longer able to maintain their private residences. No agreement was reached. Finally, after a great deal of search and negotiations with the owners, and with initial funding by the First Congregational Church in the form of a zero-interest loan, the group acquired the Manning property, approximately 12 acres of land on River Road in Washington Depot. The purchase price was \$27,000.00.

The financing of the project became extremely difficult. Initially the group favored private financing, but mortgage carrying charges would double the initial cost of the project. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which became the Department of Housing and Urban Develop-

The 1970s in Washington

ment (HUD) during the course of the project, required Shepaug Apartments, Inc., to obtain tax exempt status from the Town of Washington. Nearly a year after its founding, the group was given tax exemption.

The arduous task of seeking federal monies began.

Mountains of paperwork and endless applications were handled by the volunteer group. The effort was judged to be too small to hire a project consultant, although later the group learned it could have been eligible for the funding of such expertise. Shortly after the inception of the corporation, there was a freeze on federal housing funds.

Architects from Massachusetts were retained. The project director assigned to the group had three hospitalizations in one year. Even after recovery he had difficulty in meeting deadlines. At one critical point he failed to submit 11 items to HUD in the application process. The Town of Washington wanted to charge taxes on the vacant property, as for three years no building had been done. Matters dragged on. The Town withdrew the tax exemption with a willingness to reconsider the matter if and when building took place. A 40-year mortgage was secured and contractor engaged.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development guaranteed that the mortgage payments and rents would be subsidized by the federal government contingent upon the local group's receiving a 40-year guarantee of tax exemption or abatement by the Town of Washington. A special Town Meeting would have to approve the abatement. A further problem developed in that the statute governing such exemptions sharply limited the incomes of those persons who would be eligible as tenants.

Costs of construction had risen considerably since the original estimates had been given, increasing the cost of the project by some \$50,000. Additionally, this would involve what was described by the President of Shepaug Apartments as "another merry-go-round of documents with

The Church on the Green: Beginning a Third Century

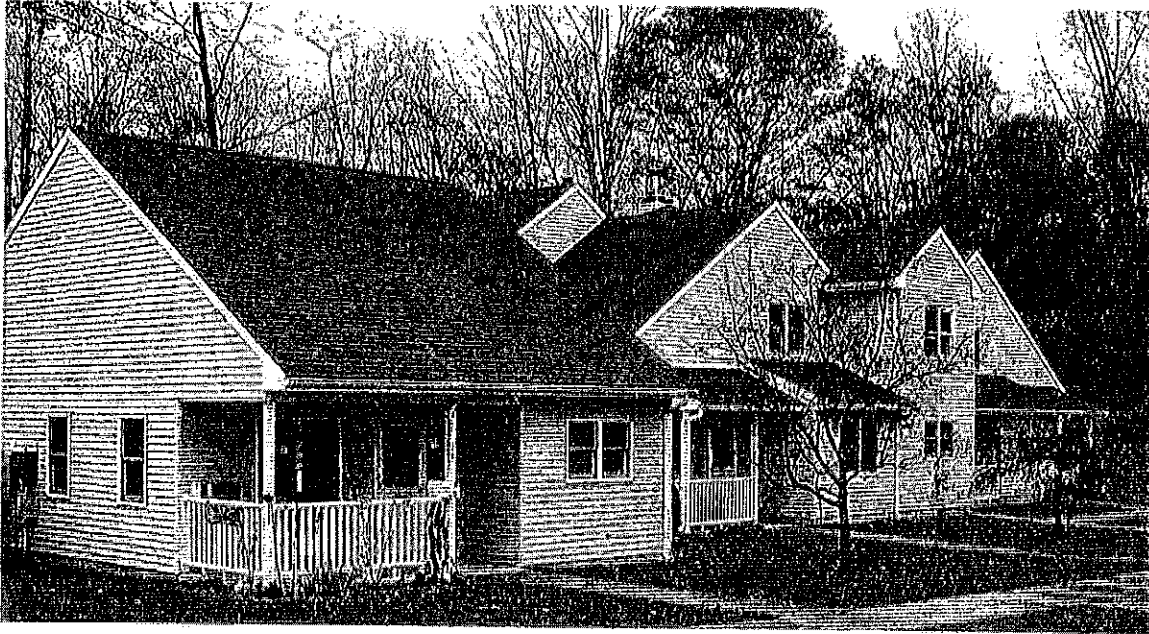
HUD." The contractor then stated that undertaking the project at this time would work a real hardship on his firm, withdrawing his involvement.

After two years and countless hours of research and negotiating, the Shepaug Apartments board sent a letter to church members, in an effort to determine just how many people were interested in entering the facility if it were built. The Chairman reported, "The response was very meager, even though relatives and friends were to be included in the replies." Seven answers to the letter were received. In her summary report, Dr. Jane Lockwood wrote, "The Corporation has, therefore, regretfully decided to recommend to the Congregation, our Sponsor, that the project be abandoned." At a Special Meeting of the Congregation on September 23, 1973, the people acted upon the report and voted to satisfy any indebtedness which the Shepaug Apartments had with the church. As of that date, the church had paid a total of \$40,793.36 for the land and other expenses. A motion, voted unanimously, expressed the appreciation of the Congregation for the many, many hours of devoted effort on the part of the Shepaug Apartments Corporation.

FRUSTRATION MANOR did not come to fruition, and the need for such affordable housing did not disappear. Neither did the strong commitment of church members go away. Out of the ashes of defeat rose new life: Rumsey Hall School, a private boarding school located on Romford Road in Washington Depot, wanted to sell seven apartments which it owned in two buildings near the business district in Washington Depot. After the '55 Flood, Mr. Harry Van Sinderen built apartments for the victims of the disaster. Rents charged were well below those of similar area accommodations. Desiring that affordable housing be available, Mr. Van Sinderen bequeathed these buildings, known as the Ellsworth Apartments, to Rumsey Hall School.

DODGE FARM APARTMENTS 1990 - 1995

WCHT's first successful affordable housing development, completed in 1995, is a fourteen apartment complex for moderate income families on a field, formerly farmed by the Potter family off of Old Litchfield Road in Washington Depot.



In early 1990 WCHT Trustee conversations began with William R. McDonald of the Connecticut Land Company of Washington, Connecticut regarding ten acres off of Route 109 next to Dodge Farm Road. Discussions between the Trustees and Mr. McDonald were private and confidential. WCHT began negotiations for purchase of the parcel with the owners of the Dodge Farm property through Richard Carey, also of the Connecticut Land Company, who represented the owner, James R. Healy trustees.

After walking the property, the Trustees deemed it suitable for a multiple family development, so at their meeting of March 21, 1990 they approved a proposal that "A group of three members of the Housing Trust would sign an agreement for \$1,500 for an initial option when a price between \$235,000 and \$275,000 was agreed upon with Mr. Healy for the 10 acre parcel." Shortly thereafter, an option for \$255,000 was executed. Thus WCHT began planning for what became fourteen apartments in a \$1.6 million development. A grant for acquisition of the site and construction would be sought from the Connecticut Department of Housing.

In June Housing Trust President John Boyer held a meeting with next-door neighbors at Dodge Farm Road. He reported: "There were some questions and they were generally in favor of the proposal." Neither Mr. Boyer, nor the rest of the Trustees had yet to hear the rumblings of NIMBY, nor had they experienced the full force of opposition.

At the June 26, 1990 Trustee meeting, the board chose King and Tuthill of Avon as architects for the project. Bruce Tuthill attended the meeting in September and brought plans, drawings and architectural concepts for the preliminary State of Connecticut housing application. Board approved the plans and the filing of an application with Department of Housing for fourteen apartments in the moderate-income family grant program. There would be one-1Bedroom, eight-2Bedroom, four-3 Bedroom, and one-4 Bedroom units.

At its October Trustees meeting, Mr. Boyer reported that he had filed the State preliminary application. The board voted to ask the Washington Board of Finance for a loan, to be paid back with state grant money, of \$9,500 for engineering costs. This amount was later supplemented by an additional \$11,000 from the Board of Finance. The Board was also preparing to request \$45,000 from the town for pre-development costs after receiving DOH preliminary approval for funding of the development. The DOH conducted a public hearing in Town Hall on the suitability of the DF project on November 28, 1990.

On December 3, 1990, the day before a Town Meeting to consider WCHT's request for pre-development funds, the DOH granted preliminary approval of \$1,460,580 for the 14 unit Dodge Farm project. The approval letter, signed by DOH Commissioner John F. Papandrea, granted an invitation to submit a final application. The Trustees were greatly encouraged by this action, as an invitation to submit a final application to DOH nearly always resulted in full funding and a completed project. The Washington Town Meeting on December 4th approved a loan of \$35,000. This show of positive support by the populace occurred early in the process and before organized opposition tried to halt the project.

Two appraisals done by the State came in at \$120,000. Since this was less than 50% of the \$255,00 option price, Mr. Healy offered to reduce the selling price to \$225,000, and gave an extension with no further option payment until July 1st. In the purchase agreement, the Trust agreed to allow the possibility of a continuation of a public road through the property to the western line, allowing future development beyond the Dodge Farm project.

The Board realized it had to raise a lot of private funding in addition to State and Town grants. The Board minutes of September 1991 record: "Our special private fund, spearheaded by newest member, John Millington, has total pledges of \$79,000. Donors will be notified when the final state approval is granted for the Dodge Farm property sale." Mr. Millington had only recently joined WHCT, but his adeptness at raising money and his political connections in Hartford played absolutely critical roles in making the dream of affordable housing for Washington come to fruition. His leadership ultimately helped raise local money For Dodge Farm. Perhaps more critical was Mr. Millington's influence in the state Capitol of Hartford, when he single-handedly gained the support of Henry S. Scherer, Jr. Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Housing. You see, Lowell Weicker was Governor at the time, and John had raised money for Weicker's election campaign. When he called Commissioner Scherer (appointed by Governor Weicker) to ask for help in getting state money for Dodge Farm, the Commissioner told John that he "wants this project to go through and not to fail." The Trust's spirits were bolstered by this news; a bolstering that would help the Trust face obstacles yet to hurdle.

Here is how Jack Boyer remembers John's role in 'making the deal' with the Commissioner: "John came aboard WCHT early in this project. He was at a cocktail party, talking with Phil Payson (WCHT Treasurer and Trustee) and Phil said to John, 'We're stymied with the housing project' And John said, 'I don't know whether I can help, but I'll sure try because this is so important to our town.'" Millington continues the story: "And I just said to Scherer, 'Why don't you make this a bell weather for the whole state? Now here's a very rich town, but it isn't so rich that we don't need to help people. ' That was to make a pitch for the big money.'" Boyer said, "This was absolutely crucial. All we had at that point was the right to buy the property if we ever got the money. Dick (Sears) and I weren't professional money raisers, and John, you could help. And I think Scherer liked the idea of a town like Washington accepting affordable housing for the first time. Nobody up here in Northwest Connecticut was doing it at any size at the time."

The Trust needed more cash for pre-development costs (well drilling, engineering, architect, survey, soil analysis, water testing, etc.) so it contacted the Connecticut Housing Investment Fund (CHIF) which granted a 0%, \$30,000 loan on August 1, 1991 for pre-development costs, to be payable on or before June 14, 1992.

Working the Dodge Farm apartment site plan through the local land use regulatory process, the Trustees received approval of the Washington Zoning Commission for the development in December 1991. By February of 1992 the Trust approved final drawings from King and Tuthill Architects and submitted them to DOH.



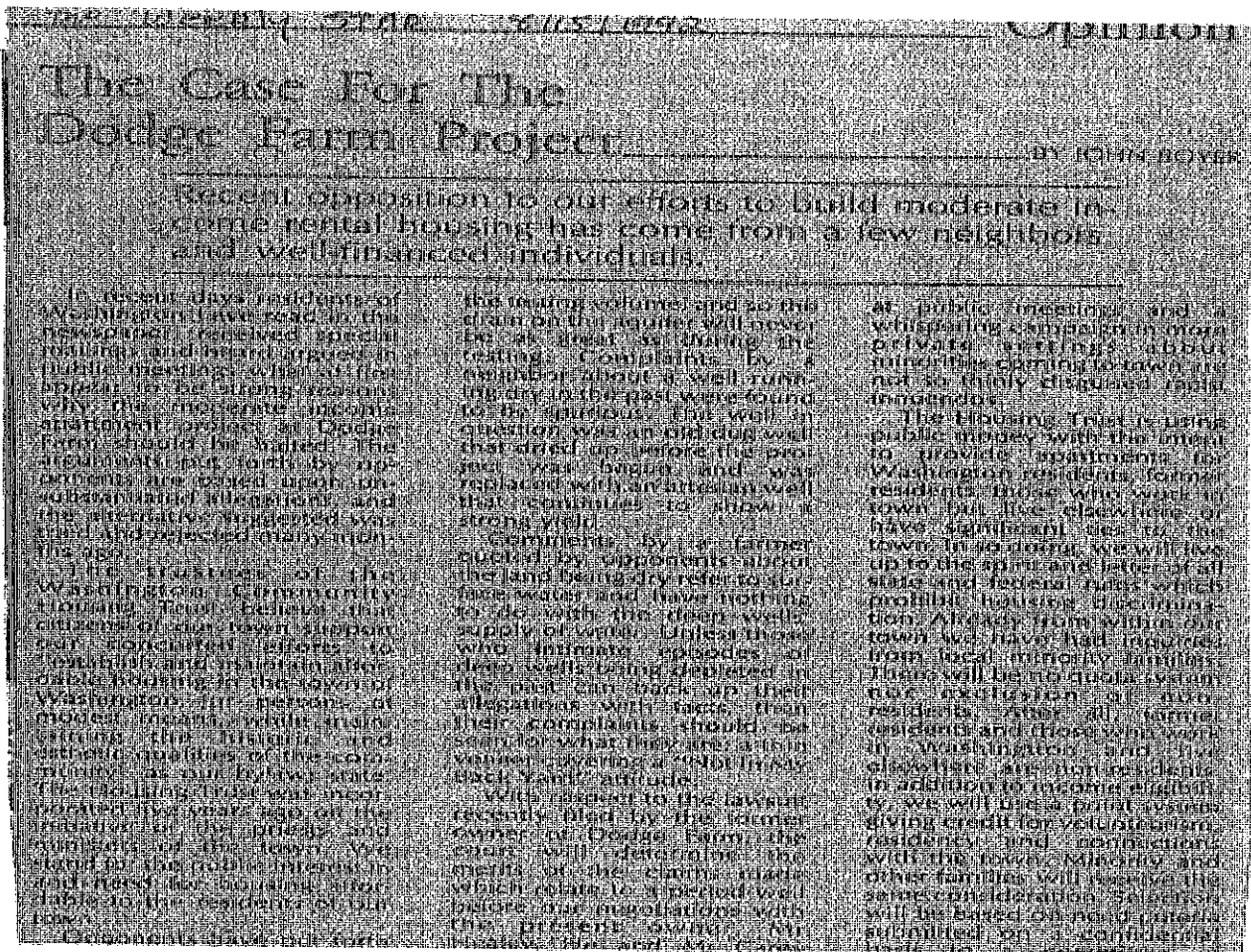
Because the development, like most of the housing in Washington, had no 'public' water supply, it had to create its own water system and water company. The Trust hired Ron Black of R.J. Black Company to design the system, prepare an application to the Department of Health and help WCHT create a water company. However, by June 1992, the Trust had water problems--too little water. WCHT minutes report "to date \$6,600 has been spent on drilling for water. And 'It was a dry hole.' Drilling will take place in the next day or two at the site of the doused hole that John Boyer had checked out."

Jack Boyer recalls the miracle of finding water at Dodge Farm: "Remember the drilling, want to talk about the drilling? The well," he laughs. "Nobody could find a place to drill and find water, and so in desperation somebody said there's a diviner, call him. He had put in a bid on the drilling, but he happened to be the guy that did not win the well-drilling contract. He said he would come over and help us locate water. So Jane and I went out and watched the guy, and, oh my, I said this is like magic. He was nice enough to do this and he went around with his willow switch. Jane and I tried it and the stick pointed down and he

said, "Drill here!" So that's where we marked it and lo and behold we got water. The guy who lost the contract to drill the well, was a diviner who out of goodness found the water we needed. Do you believe this kind of stuff? This only happens in a miracle!"

Boyer recalls further water issues: "So the driller came out and sure enough water came up, but they said it had benzene in it. The well guy came and spent the night there and up came water with kerosene or benzene or something in it. BENZENE! This is awful. It turned out that his drilling equipment was leaking oil into the well hole. So we made him clean his equipment and go through and do it again. And it was then okay, came out pure. There wasn't a lot of it, but it passed muster. It wasn't a huge amount, but it was enough to go ahead with the project, otherwise we were dead in the water."

At public meetings, opponents of the development claimed that, because Art Potter had pastured cows on that property for years the water would be no good because of nitrates from the cow manure. This claim, like many others posed along the way--such as the apartments would create traffic problems, no one would want to live a mile and a half from the village center and there was no public transportation available nearby - all proved specious and unfounded.



On June 3, 1992 a Voices newspaper article reported about the contentious Town meeting, where voters rejected WCHT's request for \$45,000 of town money for predevelopment costs. In the meeting Susan Mac Donnell Le May spoke about Mr. Carey's (the current owner of her mother's former property) deception to her mother. She mentioned the filing of a grievance complaint against Mr. Carey as realtor. A neighbor of the property, Mr. Shane, wanted to buy the remaining 29 acres from the owners but was told cluster housing was immanent and that might raise the selling price of the remaining parcel.

WCHT needed a loan from the Town to pay for an extended option in order to hold the property long enough for the state money to come in. Jack Boyer recalls vociferous, organized opposition at the June town meeting: "We asked for twenty-five grand for the option and other stuff. Several of us made the plea. All the realtors were sitting in the front row. It was a pretty big turnout. The place was full. At the end of the meeting, they took a vote—and it was turned down. The realtors came up and said, 'Tough luck Jack, it was a nice try!' It was one of my most memorable nights, because I felt, 'You (expletives deleted!)" Boyer continues: "What they didn't know was the next morning, Dick and I got in a car and went to Hartford and got \$25,000 from the Housing Department. The guy in the Housing Department didn't like us much, he was always a pain in the butt. But they all know that John (Millington) knew their boss Hank Scherer, the Commissioner, and Governor Weicker. Apparently Weicker had talked with Scherer. Scherer was a nice guy. They all spoke well of us. It was smooth. We had a commitment coming back from Hartford after that terrible town meeting. Within a couple of weeks, we had a contingent commitment for the whole project of \$1.4million."

Washington housing trust clarifies its mission

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — The Washington Housing Trust has clarified its mission to provide affordable housing for the nation's low-income families. The trust, which was established in 1988, has been instrumental in the development of several housing projects in the Washington, D.C. area. The trust's mission is to provide affordable housing for the nation's low-income families. The trust, which was established in 1988, has been instrumental in the development of several housing projects in the Washington, D.C. area. The trust's mission is to provide affordable housing for the nation's low-income families.

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Resident: town should look into housing alternatives

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — A resident of Washington, D.C. has urged the town to look into housing alternatives. The resident, who has lived in the town for several years, has expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing options. The resident, who has lived in the town for several years, has expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing options. The resident, who has lived in the town for several years, has expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing options.

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By now, the opposition from neighbors and others who wanted to destroy the project was becoming organized. Wealthy neighbors hired a private investigator to try and undermine WCHT. Wealthy neighbors donated money for a smear campaign and negative letters began to appear in newspapers. One noteworthy example of a smear letter was signed by a nearby neighbor, John Meeker, and mailed on July 20, 1992. (See Meeker's letter). Housing Trust President John Boyer replied in local papers to false claims and innuendos through letters to the editors of local papers.

Jack Boyer later reflected on the antagonists: "There were people all over town, not just the realtors, who thought this was going to be the end of Washington as we know it." Opponents expressed fears that people from Bridgeport were going to come up here and live. Actually heard by Trust members from naysayers in the back of one of the town hall meetings was a concern that "those kinds of people are going to come here." Two very wealthy gentlemen who lived behind the property, Messrs. Shane and Sunshine, called John Millington, saying: "We can't believe you're doing this." John remembers replying, "I'll bet you can't believe there are poor people in this town either." Other wealthy residents were furiously opposed to Dodge Farm.

Long delays with finding water, bad weather and procuring loans caused the Trust to fall behind on payments to Mr. Healy money and the options to purchase were expiring. Healy was beginning to doubt that the Trust would purchase the property and complete the project, so along with his real estate agents Richard Carey and William McDonald, attended the Board of Trustee's meeting in September 1992. Healy stated his anxieties regarding the Dodge Farm project. John Boyer assured him that the project is too far along with the state to make a difference. Mr. Healy pressed for a December 31, 1992 extension date. A large sum was requested to continue the extension beyond January 1, 1993. John Boyer stated "no moneys will be available until closings go through. We have paid well over ten percent already on the land." Regrets were given to Messrs. Healy and Carey regarding a lawsuit that took place in Litchfield. Family members related to the previous owner of the land being sold by Healy and Carey had brought suit against them, but ultimately dropped the charges.

Mr. Healy continued to be very frustrated with the continual delays in the project and closing dates. In a long letter to the Trustees on October 26th, after a litany of what he terms his 'concessions' and 'unanticipated expenses' and a cataloging the trust's extension requests over 30 months, he felt "compelled to state that I was singularly unimpressed by the lack of concern evident from statements made by several of the members of the Housing Trust at the September 8th meeting. The apparent unwillingness to consider the matter of proceeding to a closing of title one of urgency is distressing." He feels if the trust "fails to fulfill its contractual obligation to purchase the property, I will be severely damaged in that I will be left with stigmatized property surrounded by neighbors rendered hostile due to the protracted nature of the process." Healy states in a November 6, 1992 letter to John Boyer: "I feel, Jack, that you have time and again misrepresented to me the status of your application process, particularly with regard to the time it will take to obtain required funding." WCHT kept sending partial option payments and decided not to pay any

additional dollars for the total land price. In fact, the closing was still months away, but the trust was making steady progress toward obtaining the necessary funding.

Jack Boyer recalls the long process of holding onto the property over two and a half years this way: "Dick Carey was the owner's real estate agent and brother of somebody important down there... We laid down a small amount of money, which was going to be credited if we bought the place. It turned out this guy (Healy) had no other options, and we kept extending it and extending it, offering a little more money each time. We needed a little more time. All options were credited toward the purchase price. He apparently didn't have a chance to sell it to anybody else or he would have kicked us out long ahead of time. The guy's lawyer was threatening to drop the contract, saying we were diddling around."

Because of the size of the new water system, the final approval comes by way of a very stringent regulatory process set up by the Department of Public Utilities Control. This process added more than a year to the development timeline. The October 1992 Trust minutes record: "The Dodge Farm application has been before the DPUC since August 25th. The State Health Department had requested tests for eight trace metals. Three new samples were sent to the state laboratory that will refer the results to the DPUC."



The year 1993 saw the Trust needing more 'pre-development money' for the project, so Trustees Jack Boyer and Bill Fairbairn appealed to the congregation of the First Congregational Church of Washington for a loan. Members of the church voted in March 1993 to loan \$10,000 contingent upon DPUC's approval of water system. Shortly thereafter both the Connecticut Departments of Public Health and Public Utilities Control granted approval of the Dodge Farm water system. In July Bruce Tuthill, architect, submitted the final Dodge Farm construction package, including mechanical and water works, to the Department of Housing Final Review Committee, which approved the plans.

In October 1993 the WCHT Board resolved to accept the low bid as per the state requirements for receiving the funding. The contract was for \$1,359,000 from the Haynes Construction Company that would have 270 days to finish the project. The Board requested that the DOH recommend to the Connecticut Bonding Commission that the project be funded at its December 10, 1993 meeting. WCHT advertised for a Clerk of the Works in November. As expected, in December the State of Connecticut approved a \$1.9 million

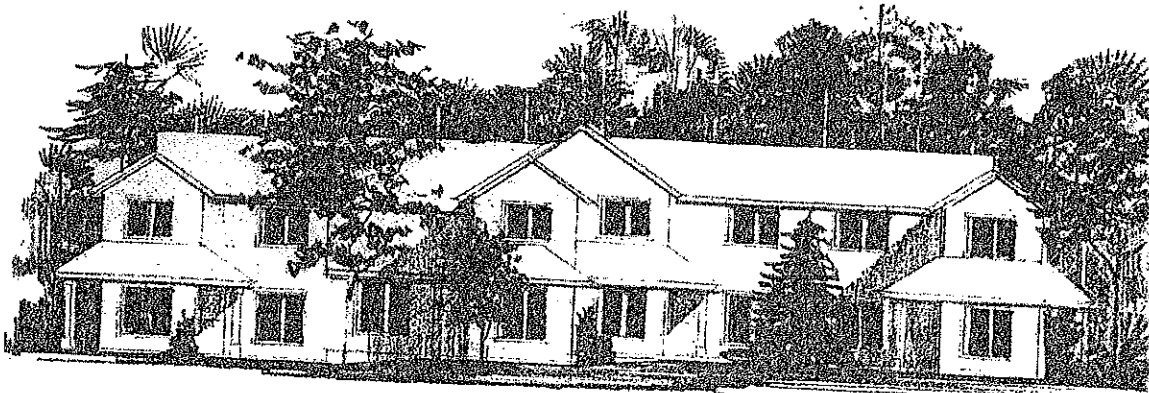
grant/loan for this 14 units of moderate-income family apartments in the Town of Washington.

The Washington Community Housing Trust formally became the owner of the property now known as Dodge Farm Apartments, on a new lane off of Old Litchfield Road (Route 109) in Washington Depot on February 24, 1994. The Haynes Construction Company began site work on April 11th with a scheduled completion date in January of 1995.

Money began to flow early in 1994. One half of the town and church loans (\$32,500 and \$5,000) were paid off, as was the entire CHIF loan (\$30,000). On May 5, 1994 the Groundbreaking Ceremony for Dodge Farm Apartments took place with Lieutenant Governor Eunice Groark and other government officials attending.

In June WCHT hired Community Housing Management of Hamden, Connecticut for Management of the Original Opening and Rental of Dodge Farm, to create policies, and set up a Resident Selection Committee, a selection process and proposed leases. Betsy Reid of the New Samaritan Corporation and Orrin Hosford, North West Region Coordinator of Community Housing Management, described their contract to the Trustees.

At the November 1994 Board meeting, Mr. Boyer distributed the completed Dodge Farm Apartments brochure. Advertisements will appear in African/American newspapers in Waterbury and Hartford. Mr. Boyer has also secured "air time" on a Spanish-speaking cable television station in Danbury. These publicity efforts will satisfy the Department of Housing requirements for equal opportunity housing.



The Trustees designed a Point System for tenant eligibility, using as a guideline criteria approved by the DOH for state sponsored housing. The Board gave slightly higher point credit for residents and those who work in the Town of Washington. A second category of people who will receive priority points includes those who are "Least Likely to Apply" for the apartments. These are the identified racial minority groups from WCHT's initial application to DOH. A third category includes those with special economic and financial needs including people who have been or will be displaced from housing, those who have extreme income need, and those currently living in substandard housing. An accumulated total of priority points from all three categories will be considered by the Resident

Selection Committee in determining priority of eligibility. Mr. Hosford of Community Housing Management began mailing applications to the nearly 70 names on the inquiry list.

Mr. Boyer notified the Board that the DOH might offer a financial bonus if the project is completed prior to the contract date. The Board encouraged him and Mr. Millington to find out the details, as it would be helpful in meeting the proposed \$15,689.53 shortfall of the project. The shortfall has to do with unpaid balances of loans to the Town of Washington and the First Congregational Church. By mid-January 1995, the development was completed, ahead of schedule and \$20,000 under budget. Mr. Boyer petitioned the DOH to use the overage to repay loans. The Town of Washington granted the Certificate of Occupancy on March 17, 1995.

The Resident Selection Committee chose thirteen individuals and families for residency. The Board voted unanimously to "Receive and approve with appreciation the resident selection list." Mr. Boyer immediately sought the DOH approval for the list. Of the 14 initial occupants 8 live in Washington, 2 work in Washington, while others came from Kent, New Milford, and Danbury.

Voices

The Newspaper
of Southbury, Her
South Britain, Middletown,
Bethlehem, New Preston,
Roxbury, Bridgewater

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RESIDENTS VISIT — The Dodge Farm affordable apartments on Route 109 in Washington (right) drew many viewers at an open house on March 5. Above, Washington Community Housing Trust President Jack Boyer (right) with Orrin Hosford, supervisor of the Dodge Farm affordable apartments at the open house. (Minor photos)



The Board voted to request the town name the new drive into Dodge Farm Apartments Brinsmade Road, in honor of an early Washington resident.

Minutes of the 1995 Annual meeting of WCHT noted that Tammy Brinton Lautz, a resident of Dodge Farm, was hired by Community Housing Management as site Administrator. Ms. Lautz reported in April that "the general mood was excellent at Dodge Farm and that she is exploring possible DOH funding for an on-premise's office with adjacent room for tenant association activities."

The October 1996 Town newsletter, Washington Times, reported about Affordable Housing, touting the Dodge Farm project where funds "were provided by a combination of State grants, generous contributions from concerned community residents and \$65,500 in seed money loans from the Town. The town received repayment of the entire amount as well as a supplemental state grant of \$9,865 triggered by the successful implementation of the affordable housing programs.

RIVERWOODS SENIOR HOUSING 1999-2002



Following the successful completion of the Dodge Farms Apartments in 1995, the Housing Trust became the town's chief advocate for senior housing. A 1997 WCHT survey of 400 senior citizens circulated by the Washington Senior Center showed that there was a need for elderly housing. Sixteen percent of the surveys were returned and three in four respondents said they were interested in new housing within three years. "The town is 'graying' said WCHT president John Boyer with older residents having a tough time hanging on to their homes." The results of the survey were reported to the Board of Selectmen in the autumn of 1997.

In a May 1998 memo to Region 12 School Board, President Boyer said, that the "Housing Trust determined that a 'substantial need exists' for senior housing that would allow seniors to walk to destinations in the village of Washington Depot. One site was the old town garage off Titus Road and the other next to the Washington Primary School on School Street. Both locations were ideal in terms of proximity to the village. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's salt remediation requirements for the old town garage made that site unsuitable. "The only other promising site in the Depot with the potential for six or eight senior apartments is on land leased to the Shepaug Regional School District #12 by the Town. We believe senior housing in proximity to the primary school could provide real educational values through the interaction of seniors volunteering to work with young students. In addition, a residency in sight of the school buildings could significantly diminish the occurrence of vandalism on school grounds."

In 1998, WCHT President Boyer and John Millington appeared before the school board and requested from the Regional School District #12 a piece of land on which to build senior

housing, in Wash. Depot in proximity to WPS. The Town had appropriated \$10,000 for preliminary studies. July 1998 WCHT moved to 'appoint a committee and authorize architectural and engineering studies for Senior Housing preliminary work.' Nothing came of this attempt to provide senior housing.

In 1999 Bill and Martha Fairbairn mentioned they owned a six-acre sloping plot of land at 90 Worcester Road off of River Road in Washington Depot that they would donate to the Housing Trust if it was suitable for housing. A description of the parcel is found in the 'Statement of Neighborhood Impact' from the Zoning Commission Special Permit Application for what became known as Riverwoods Senior Apartments: "The proposed location on Worcester Road, some 400 feet off River Road, with substantial visual buffering, will be well separated from neighboring residences. In appearance, both structures will be steep-roofed and clapboard-sided in a manner resembling a large traditional, two story New England home of about 4000 square feet. The style is in harmony with the adjacent neighborhood. Of the six acre building site, less than 4% will be occupied by the two structures."

The story of how the site became 'viable' illustrates another serendipitous moment in the Housing Trust's desire to fulfill its mission. When they heard of the Fairbairn's offer, two Trustees, Walter Whitney and Richard Sears, visited the site one afternoon. Years later Sears recalled, "Bill Fairbairn offered the Housing Trust a piece of property just off River Road in Washington Depot, on an old part of Worcester Road. It was very sloped, much shale and ledge. Walter Whitney and I walked the site one day. I could see no housing there, up against the south slope of a hill. But Walter who had experience developing condominiums saw that this would be a very good site for senior living. He imagined a row of apartments on the lower level as you drive in and a driveway around the back would allow for another row of one-level of apartments. In his eyes it was a very workable site. Except, there are no town sewers in Washington, all wastewater must be treated in sub-surface septic systems. Nowhere on this site was there room for a community septic system for 10 or 12 apartments. Well, that idea's out, I thought again. But walking back down the road, heading home, Walt and I thought, 'What if the septic fields were off site, in a suitable location?' Off-site septic systems were already in place in town, like properties on the Washington Green that pipe sewage down to the ball field in the Depot, so why not here?"

It so happened that down the hill and across River Road was a property, owned by the Jahnke family that formerly had been proposed for senior housing by the First Congregational Church. A committee in the early 1980's worked long and hard on a federal application, the story goes, until red tape killed the deal with HUD, and the plan died. The church sold the land to the Jahnke's who built their home there.

John Boyer in speaking with Dick Sears later said: "The original story you told me is that we had just found out there was no septic on the property, and we were pretty down about it. On a subsequent day you were exercising down River Road and ran into Susan Jahnke and you told her the sad story and she said, 'Well, put the septic on our property'. And I thought, Wow! You had just gotten the bad news and ran into her and told her the sad story and...the rest is history! Susan actually said, 'Let me talk with my husband Uwe, who is with

his company over in Bahrain.' She did. Uwe agreed. The Jahnkes were generous, great neighbors, only asking for a new, expanded septic system for them in trade for an easement to allow WCHT to build a community system for the planned senior apartments." Boyer emphasized again: "That was a very generous offer. Very few people would say, 'sure, put your shit on my land!'"

Time and again, like the example of the 'divining' well driller a few years before at Dodge Farms, WCHT found neighbors, townspeople, businesses and town officials willing to 'lend a hand' and go the extra mile to make affordable housing available.

So in 1999 WCHT took possession of 6.6 acres donated by the Fairbairn's that had 520 feet of road frontage on old Worcester Road, off of River Road in Washington Depot. With the land in hand, the Trust began preparing for a senior housing complex. Some neighbors however, were not happy and came out to fight this proposal through the entire approval process, just like at Dodge Farms. The nearest landowners were most upset, fearing terrible changes in their neighborhood. At one of the public hearings, neighbors from across the street cried that 'swimming pools full of effluent will be flowing down Worcester Road, polluting the beautiful Shepaug River.' John Millington recalls that opponents claimed that the site was a 'mess of ticks', not suitable for seniors. They also said, it is so dark, the seniors will be depressed. Still others conjectured that seniors will not want to live there, they'll be in danger walking along the road, the sight lines into Worcester Road are bad and people drive so fast and seniors will make their turns so slowly that there will be crashes there all the time. Expressing a minority opinion, one neighbor within sight of the complex, was not at all opposed to the project when Housing Trust leaders visited to introduce the plans.

The Trust forged ahead and hired architect Gary Nurnberger, AIAI of Woodbury to draw up plans to create aesthetically pleasing housing that would keep in character with the town and neighborhood as much as possible. From the Bid Specifications developed later we get a picture of the project: This is "New Construction on a tight, irregular uncleared site with some ledge No existing utilities; new wells, new piped off-site septic systems, new underground power and communications are required. Two structures of affordable housing; 6 residential apartments in each structure, including 2 garages. paving and landscaping. Upper levels of Modular construction, lower levels of panelized or stick-built conventional construction. Project is completely handicapped accessible and is privately financed by the WCHT."

Philips Payson, WCHT Trustee and Treasurer, came up with the name Riverwoods for the development. Other options considered included Shepaug Heights and River Apartments. Walter Whitney served as Chairman of the Building Committee and shepherded the entire project through to completion.

Steven Winter Associates of Norwalk, CT was chosen as consultant to "help this project become a noteworthy model for other communities with regards to sustainable design and energy efficiency as well as in the selection of a modular housing manufacturer." Dudley

Ashwood, P.E., was the engineer, Southbury, CT; T. Michael Alex, was the surveyor, Washington, CT.

Architect Nurnberger forwarded a preliminary a site plan and drawings to the Zoning Commission on October 18, 1999 showing eight units of approximately 800 square feet in two buildings. WCHT completed engineering soil and drainage tests by the end of October. In order to make the complex economically feasible, Nurnberger had to increase the number of apartments to twelve. He prepared preliminary renderings for two colonial-style structures with steep roofs, each containing six units entered on two separate levels. 12 apartments: 4-768 sf, 1 BR; 4-714 sf, 1BR w/Study; 4-550 sf, 1BR, each unit on one-level.

WCHT sent a Report on Senior Housing to town residents: *The WCHT has applied to develop twelve units of housing in two structures on six acres of land donated by Washington attorney Bill Fairbairn. Four of the units will include a living room with dining area, bedroom, study/bedroom, kitchen, bath laundry and storage shed. Eight units will be single bedroom floor plans ranging from about 600 to 780 sq. ft.*

Based on soil testing, the six-acre site was not deemed to provide septic field capacity for more than two units. What first appeared as an intractable impediment to the plans was answered by a generous and neighborly offer from the Jahnke family to use part of their property across River Road for septic fields. Financing is expected through a consortium of local banks.

Trustees Sears, Whitney and Boyer met with Lesley Higgins-Biddle of New Samaritan Corporation of Hamden, CT to discuss WCHT's proposal to develop affordable senior housing in Washington. WCHT wanted to retain as much local control in building and choosing occupants as possible, so was considering using only local funds. Ms. Higgins-Biddle made this point in a letter dated February 15, 2000 in response to the meeting: "Affordability: I don't believe that the project, as currently planned, can be affordable in any normative sense without some grant financing. You might want to reconsider some available sources of grant financing." She also reminded the Trust that it could not restrict occupancy of the housing to local residents, because under Fair Housing laws "you cannot discriminate against non-Washington applicants under any financing."

The First Selectmen Allan Chapin was concerned about the amount of rock needing to be removed from the site. The Trust's engineer, Dudley Ashwood PE, put Mr. Chapin's concern to rest with his detailed description of the 2040 cubic yards of rock that would be removed to prepare the site. Ashwood estimated that rock removal would cost \$100,500.

The First Selectman approved an 18-foot wide private driveway. The Trust would assume all maintenance and repairs of the driveway. The Fire Company was consulted about fire vehicle access and suggested the installation of a 5,000 gallon water cistern.

At the Zoning Commission public hearing on March 27, 2000 more than 56 residents signed a statement in support of the application, while six neighbors expressed concerns. The public hearing was continued on April 13th.

Meanwhile, a neighbor tried to block the development by claiming that that portion of old Worcester Road had been abandoned by the town and become part of his property. An article in the Republican-American in the October 30, 1999 edition began: "Is old Worcester Road a driveway or a town road or really known by the name Old Pent Road? The answer to that question may decide the fate of a senior housing project proposed by Washington Community Housing Trust." Trust President Boyer conducted a title search and concluded that it is a town road. However a neighbor continued to claim the road was part of his property, not a town road. The Selectmen Chapin, Dutton, Luckey agreed to have the town's attorney perform a title search to determine the ownership of the road.

The Zoning Commission on June 26, 2000 stated that the Town's Attorney David Miles and the Board of Selectmen both determined that Worcester Road, although of low frequency of use, had never been abandoned or discontinued: "it should be presumed Worcester Road continues to be a Town road." More importantly, the Selectmen unanimously approved the WCHT application for a special permit to construct 12 units of affordable senior housing.

In a Waterbury Republican American newspaper article of June 29, Zoning Commissioner David Owen said, "It was the right thing to do" and it was the most carefully researched issue the commission has acted on in a long time. Walter Whitney, a director with WCHT, said the Housing Trust would begin the project this fall. Grading and preparing the site, excavating and installation of septic lines and utilities, pouring foundations will take about two months. Whitney said the organization is pleased the proposal passed. But members must now raise about \$400,000 in donations or low- or no-interest loans of the \$1.2million total cost. The organization said it anticipates bank financing for the remaining \$800,000. "We are now on to the next phase of raising the money. We are looking for a public and private partnership in support of the senior housing project." Calhoun Street resident Ernest Swanson, 80, said it's nice to know that if something were to happen to elderly people, they would have a place to go. Also, people who have lived in town all their lives will have a chance to stay here and not move on."

The original proposal was for eight living units in two buildings, with 12 parking spaces, but for better economy of price per unit the application was amended to 12 living units and 18 parking spaces. Both the Inland Wetlands and Zoning Commissions granted approval of the amended application. The trust's engineer assured the commissions that there would be no change in the drainage calculations based on the addition of parking spaces.

In January 2000 Board members signed up to attend coffee hours at all churches to spread the word about Riverwoods. Sears and Boyer offered to meet with neighbors but only one family showed up. The Washington Senior Center News reported on the progress of WCHT and announced, "that representatives would be present for a discussion at the Senior Center. The Trust reported that they were very warmly received. "All 3 selectmen (Chapin, Luckey, Dutton) were present at the meeting and each spoke in guarded, but generally favorable ways." Following the meeting WCHT trustees showed neighbors and seniors the actual site where buildings would be built.

Neighboring opponents tried to de-rail the project again by getting the Janke's to deny an easement on their 52 River Road property for the placement of the septic system for Riverwoods. Uwe Jahnke reported to the Trust in March of 2000: "While I was home last week I was telephoned and visited by four of my neighbors attempting to get us to change our minds concerning the septic tank of the senior citizen housing being on our property. I'm taking, and apparently will get more, of the flak."

In September 2000 the Selectmen voted unanimously to support the work of WCHT "in their effort to secure the engineering, surveying, and architectural data necessary to bring a proposal before the public to construct elderly affordable housing."

Architect Nurnberger circulated preliminary floor plans to the Trustees in February 2001. At the same meeting, the Board discussed financing, including the requesting of a grant of \$250,000 from the town along with other financing from a bank.

March 2001 State Department of Public Health first said that Riverwoods needed to be a 'community water system.' DPH sent a letter to Alan Chapin, First Selectman, March 13, 2001 saying the Department has determined this new development will be considered a community water system and a "Certificate of Convenience and Necessity" is required, and therefore, no approvals can be issued by the Town of Washington before a Certificate is granted." Architect Nurnberger argued to the local Health Department that the development was smaller than the number of people that would trigger a public water system designation. Walter Whitney notified the engineer, Dudley Ashwood in May about this, and said: "The requirements (for a community water system) are so onerous that if our design population is not less than 25—we should change it to less than 25." In fact the design of 12 apartments showed a population of 24 for the complex, effectively skirting the 'onerous' state requirements. This was another bullet dodged, as to apply for a Certificate of Convenience & Necessity, as the Trust already knew from it's Dodge Farm experience, would add many months to the development process.

The Project Budget was estimated at \$1.3 million. Revenue: \$750,000 bank loan; \$500,000 private and public donations, and \$50,000 that had already been raised. Expenses: Site work \$300,000; Construction \$900,000; Soft costs \$100,000. On March 25, 2001 the First Congregational Church voted to extend a \$240,000 loan to WCHT for the senior housing project with terms: 30 year payment, zero interest, payable at \$8,000 per year and loan secured as a 2nd mortgage on the property. Next month the New Mil Bank offered a \$750,000 loan. The Trust made plans to ask the Town for a \$250,000 grant.

April 30: WCHT Trustees Meeting minutes record: "New Mil Bank will loan us \$750,000 for 7 ½% for 30 years. Approval is anticipated contingent upon the First Cong Church funds, the Jahnke recorded septic easement and the Town resolutions to be voted upon at the Annual May 10, 2001 Meeting. A letter of opposition from a citizen pleaded to 'not use property tax dollars to support rents for low income individuals', also stating there were numerous other state and federal subsidy programs for such individuals."

Opposition from Neighbors was growing. On April 30, 2001 the Town Hall received a letter from Will Fawcett & Sue Howser: *"An open meeting at Bryan Town Hall is scheduled for Tuesday, May 8, beginning at 8:00 p.m. The Senior Housing proposed for construction on River Road may be on the agenda. Questions will be taken from the floor. We are opening our home for a meeting regarding the Senior Housing on Monday, May 7, at 7:30 p.m. There has been little in the local papers, through the winter, about Senior Housing, but it is still very much alive, and the difficulties it can introduce into the daily lives of so many "River Roaders" are far from resolved."*

An attachment to the Zoning Special Permit included this definition of Affordability: Rents will meet the "affordable housing" definition per Section 8-39a of the State Statutes. "Affordable" is defined as rental expenses of less than or equal to thirty percent of the median income for the municipality. The median family income for the area is \$87,400; thirty percent of 87,400 is \$26,220 or \$2,185 per month. The Trust intends to charge rents of approximately \$650 per month for the one-bedroom apartments and \$750 per month for the two bedroom apartments.

When Trustee Sears called adjacent neighbor Gael Hammer to have a conversation about building senior housing on Worcester Road, Mr. Hammer replied: "I'm going to fight you, and I'm a fighter. (Building senior housing there) is the stupidest thing I've ever heard. I'm going to get my lawyer, Richard Ebersol. No! I don't want to talk about it."

Rhoda Addison, River Road resident, sent a two-page letter in April to "oppose the planned building of affordable senior housing on the hill of a long-disused, 100 years or more, woods road." She quibbled about zoning allowing the development and that the septic system, "expensive as it would be, to be pumped down the hill, across River Road and...installed on the bank of the Shepaug River." She speaks of "needing a million dollars to blast out all that ledge and transport it—to where? This million dollars would come out of taxpayers pockets—us. Of course, we taxpayers will have to carry the huge extra costs of making the land useable and putting in a usable road bed." As with many who oppose affordable housing in 'their neighborhood', Mrs. Addison concludes, "I am not against Senior Housing—to the contrary, I would like to see it built. In fact, there is a lovely three-acre piece of land just to the south of my home."

The Housing Trust was learning that sometimes the nay-sayers of affordable housing near their home, in the guise of generosity, offer an alternate site, somewhere 'out of sight'—and of course, in someone else's back yard! If WCHT had money to buy just any property, it would choose the 'ideal location.' But the Trust consisted of well-meaning volunteers with nothing but good will and a vision for the town. It totally relied on opportunities that arise, or which Trust members and others who share the vision of a diverse town, make happen.

In general, however, the public strongly supported the project and showed that affirmation at the Annual Town Meeting, May 3, 2001, when it approved the Trust's request for a grant of \$250,000 for Riverwoods and temporary tax abatement to help keep the monthly rental rates modest.

In April of 2001, the trust put the project out to bid, with the initial dream of having the second level be of pre-manufactured, factory built construction. Three submitted bids were opened: Westchester Modular Homes of Fairfield County, \$1,368,000; Housatonic Valley Construction Co., Kent CT, \$1,357,850; JVM Contracting and Development Corp, Danbury, \$943,160 (Plus Beattie Construction Co, Sherman, CT, site work \$307,000) total of \$1,250,000. The Trustees chose the third contractor team for the job. JVM was the low bidder but was not able to obtain a bond, nor was Housatonic Valley Construction, so they were disqualified. The lower level units, with the tall rear retaining wall, were not able to be factory built, so the other bidder was ruled out. In August, the Trust advertised for two separate bids, one for site work and the other for construction/carpentry work. Apex Building Corporation was chosen in late October as general contractor and Stone Construction Company for site work. The project would be completely stick-built on site and not manufactured 2nd level buildings as originally planned.



Riverwoods Groundbreaking Ceremony – Oct 30, 2001

Pictured left to right: Walter Whitney, Jack Boyer, Gary Nurnberger, Martha and Bill Fairbairn, Alan Chapin, Bob Williams, Rev. Cheryl Anderson, Dick Sears

Like Dodge Farms, Riverwoods had a water problem. The Trustees' minutes of November 2001 record: "The well water is posing a problem. Iron content is too high in one of the wells. The second well is good and no treatment is necessary. We hope to solve the problem and not get into costly state regulations." In fact the iron in the first well required treatment. The Trustees demanded a quick fix after an angry call from the first resident, Lou Magnoli, had reported that his shirts turned orange when laundered in his apartment. By January 2002, the two buildings were framed and enclosed, with interior work having begun. The project was on schedule with occupancy planned for June 2002.

In an article in the CT Record early in 2002, "We are in the process of doing the interior work and expect to be completed by June," Walter Whitney, Chairman of the WCHT building committee stated. "The project is really progressing nicely considering we just signed the contracts with Scott (McCarthy) and Apex last December." Richard Sears, President of WCHT, noted, "Everyone on the board is extremely pleased with how the construction is progressing. From the initial negotiations up to the present construction phase, our relations with Apex and Mr. McCarthy have been excellent. This project will serve as a model for the future."

The Trustees needed to raise additional private money and sent a fundraising letter to town residents with the caption: *"The 'experts said it couldn't be done...' An executive with the largest senior housing management agency in Connecticut said that a locally funded 'affordable' senior housing complex has never been built in the state. Every project relies on state or federal grants—and the red tape and rules they dictate. You can help provide this first-ever-in-Connecticut affordable senior housing funded solely by the generosity of the people of a caring town! Join us and make a significant gift! Thank you."* The letter yielded \$22,000. Combined with earlier fundraising, the effort yielded 130 private donors, several of whom donated \$10,000, for a total of more than \$64,400. Combined with a Town of Washington grant of \$250,000, a loan from the First Congregational Church of \$240,000 and a mortgage from New Mil Bank of \$750,000 the \$1.3 million goal was achieved.

The Trustees began preparing to attract and qualify tenants. Trustee Anne Potter headed up the rent-up committee and, along with the professional aid of Tammy Lautz of Elderly Housing Management, established that the minimum age at entry would be 62 years. They began advertising for tenants in the spring of 2002 using this description:

Riverwoods Apartments is a housing facility for elderly (Head or co-Head of the household aged 62 or over). There are two buildings of two stories with 8 one-bedroom units and 4 one-bedroom plus den units. Each unit has its own entrance from the exterior. There are two units with adaptations for persons with disabilities. The unit sizes vary based on the number of rooms but range from 525 square feet to 750 square feet. There is parking for a maximum of one car per household and some limited visitor parking.

Riverwoods Apartments is owned by the Washington Community Housing Trust, Inc., a non-profit organization. Person applying must demonstrate the ability to support the rent

and utilities. The basic rent for the one-bedroom unit is \$675.00 and the one-bedroom plus den unit basic rent is \$800.00.

There is an Administrator and a Superintendent on staff provided by Elderly Housing Management as Management Agent for the Owner, but this site does not have 24 hour, seven day a week coverage. The staff is to provide administrative and maintenance services to the facility and its residents.

Services not provided by this facility are 24 hour coverage by staff, meals, housekeeping, medical care, personal services and assistance with transferring of medications, social worker, trash removal from the apartment to the dumpster or transportation. (This is not a limiting list).

This facility complies with the Fair Housing Act and other laws, which prohibit discrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin. Federal law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with certain exemptions. Complaints of discrimination may be forwarded to the Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities at 1-860-541-3400. Connecticut Law also prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of ancestry, lawful source of income, learning disability, marital status, mental retardation, sexual orientation and use of a guide dog.

The project completion and move-in time was drawing near. In June 2002 President Boyer proposed that a small garden be created with a plaque to recognize the Fairbairn's and Jahnke's for their contribution. Alan Swanson and the Waters Construction donated and moved a huge bolder to the site in order to mount a permanent, bronze plaque that would be unveiled at the dedication ceremony. The Washington Garden Club volunteered to create a garden the following spring.

WCHT held an Open House on July 7, 2002 to show off the new senior complex. From a letter to the editor of a local paper by Robert Curtis of New Preston, we can catch the spirit of the day: "Congratulations to the visionaries whose foresight culminated in the open house at Riverwoods senior housing. It is built on six beautiful acres. The first view from the driveway is two impressive buildings consisting of a total of 12 units, graced by beautiful split pediment doorway entrances. It was, with much justifiable pride, that members of the Community Housing Trust conducted groups throughout the bright and cheerful rooms, enthusiastically answer queries. Washington volunteers, you have done well, extremely well, and I should like to add my own greetings: 'Welcome to the neighborhood, Riverwoods.'"

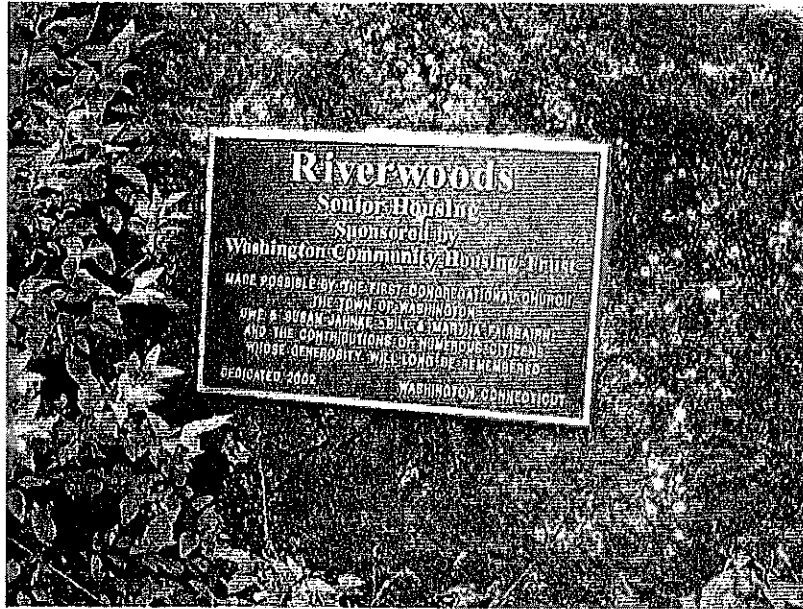
Patricia Kelly Wells another visitor to the open house expressed disappointment in her letter to the editor: "I did not like the adjoining apartments, and was dismayed to find that I felt claustrophobic and the lack of storage space bothered me. In order to fit neatly into one of those units, I would have to discard 60% of my present belongings. The kitchen cabinet space is very, very small and has to hold all items of food, pots and pans, dishes, etc. I just can't restrict my living to such tight quarters. I have family. I have friends."

Rent up progressed quite slowly that fall. A newspaper article noted: "Washington senior housing fills at slow pace." WCHT knew from experience that people move when they are ready, not when a complex is completed. This is especially true of seniors who have to make large life decisions about downsizing. Another article chided: "Washington Housing Ready—When Will They Come?" Confident that in time all twelve units would be filled, Mr. Sears, quoted in that same article said: "Let's welcome the newcomer and celebrate with the long-timers that they have a wonderful, safe, healthy home. We are on target, and this is becoming a housing community that the town will rightly be proud of."



Riverwoods Dedication Ceremony -- October 2, 2002

President Richard Sears began the ceremony: *"This is a great day in the history of Washington, Connecticut! We are here to dedicate the community's first affordable housing designed for seniors. In this act we are saying—that people of Washington honor and cherish the contributions of our seniors make as they live among us. Older citizens enrich the public life of our town by sharing their wisdom, volunteerism and commitment to time-honored values that have made this country great. In honor of our elders, we dedicate Riverwoods senior apts."*



The November 2002 Trustees minutes recorded that "Riverwoods is essentially complete. Some trivial tasks are being looked after. Our new manager, Bob Hinckley is doing a fine job. The community room is being furnished from donations from residents. Six units are occupied, and three more families are in the rent-up process." The Trustees held a Holiday party in December so the residents could meet each other and the new property manager, Bob Hinckley. The Community room was furnished with donations of furniture. By July of 2003 only two vacancies remained, and in January 2004 the final occupant was accepted. Riverwoods had full occupancy!



16 CHURCH – APARTMENTS IN NEW PRESTON VILLAGE 2001 - 2005



At the end of 2001, just as Riverwoods Senior Apartments were 'renting up', the Housing Trust began exploring the Montessori School site at 16 Church Street in New Preston for affordable apartments. Having very few financial resources, WCHT was always 'opportunistic' – that is, the group was always ready to explore any site or building that might advance the organization's mission. The wealth of the Trust is not in money; it has always been in its members and in its ability to draw financial and other resources towards accomplishing its goals. The group has always been blessed with serendipitous occurrences that made the sometimes-painful struggle worthwhile. One of these magic moments took place on a 'drive by' of the old New Preston School building that was soon to be vacated by the Washington Montessori School.

Ten years after the Trust's *16 Church Street Apartments* opened its doors, John Millington recalled in an interview: "*Gina Risley and I took a drive up to New Preston by the school. She said 'What can we do with this school?' 'They can't expand,' John said. 'but I am on the housing trust, and obviously we could use a piece of land like this to create affordable housing.'*" Millington continues: "*To make a long story short, I talked with Allie Chapin (First Selectman) about it, and we had Peter Talbot, architect, sketch up some ideas for housing. Allie, Peter and I met on Gina's sun porch with Mike Jackson (Chairman of the Town Board of Finance.)*"

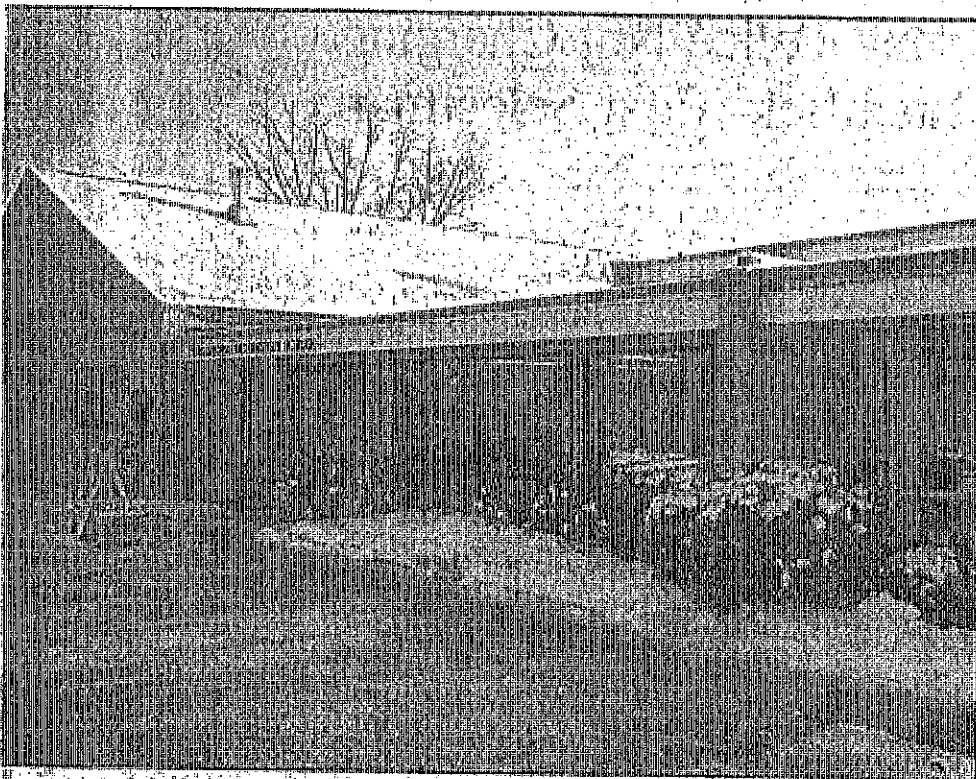
John continues: "It's a wonderful story. Gina called in Peter Talbot for his ideas. In this meeting we were talking about 'bridge loans' and all of a sudden, I see this arthritic little finger of Gina's beckoning me. And so I go over and she says, 'Don't they realize I'm paying for this?' And I said, 'I don't think they do!' I didn't know it! But she funded it. 3 million bucks!

"The money flowed with never a question. Her attorney, David Hadden, was very helpful. And the building was to be an adaptive re-use or recycling whatever we could of the old Montessori/New Preston school building. It's exquisitely built, hardwood floors, generously-sized apartments."

John also recalls: "She was beginning to lose (some of her memory), even at that meeting, and I was concerned that it would take several years to complete. Gina's attorney called and said, 'John, I understand you've been talking with Gina.' I explained the situation, and he said, 'Is there anything on paper?' I said no. You don't deal on paper with Gina. All I know is what a bunch of us heard at a meeting. She was such a generous person."

COUNTY TIMES

NINE



site of a proposed plan for affordable housing in New Preston.

Laurie Gaboardi

In a January 2002 Board President Richard Sears sent a letter to Trustees; "Since we last met, there have been several important meetings regarding an initiative to purchase the current Montessori School property on School Street New Preston. Donors, long time residents of Washington that want to provide housing for people of all ages and to make the area next to the church more aesthetically pleasing, have stepped forward to make this purchase possible. The buildings will be rehabilitated and augmented with new construction to become 14 to 18 affordable apts." An executive committee of the board

that I pulled together acted swiftly earlier this month to receive a generous gift of stock from anonymous donors that will cover the purchase of the property. This is the first installment on a completed project that will possibly cost more than \$3 million. Nearly all of the money to complete the project has already been pledged. At our meeting you will be asked to endorse action to have WCHT become the developers and owners of this needed addition to the housing 'stock' of the town."

The Executive Committee of the Trust met in early January and voted to "accept the gift of ten thousand, two hundred, sixty-five shares of Eli Lilly stock from an anonymous donor." There was a second motion to authorize the president, Richard Sears, to sell the stock "under the most advantageous price, and deposit the proceeds."

The January 28, 2002 meeting minutes mention that 'long time residents of Washington conveyed a message to WCHT trustees asking that the Trust accept a gift from these donors to cover the purchase of the Church Street property (currently for sale by the Washington Montessori School) and construct 14 to 18 affordable apartments. The entire cost (approximately three and a half million dollars) would be given with our acceptance to develop the project. A preliminary sketch, done by Peter Talbot of the building was presented to the Board. A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved: "Washington Community Housing Trust, Inc. agrees to create and manage affordable housing at 16 Church Street, New Preston, Connecticut upon the recommendation of the feasibility study and with donors' consent." The Trustees also voted "To open a new account totaling \$779,139.91 with Solomon Smith Barney, investing the major portion in corporate investment grade bonds, leaving the balance of \$100,000 in the money market account."

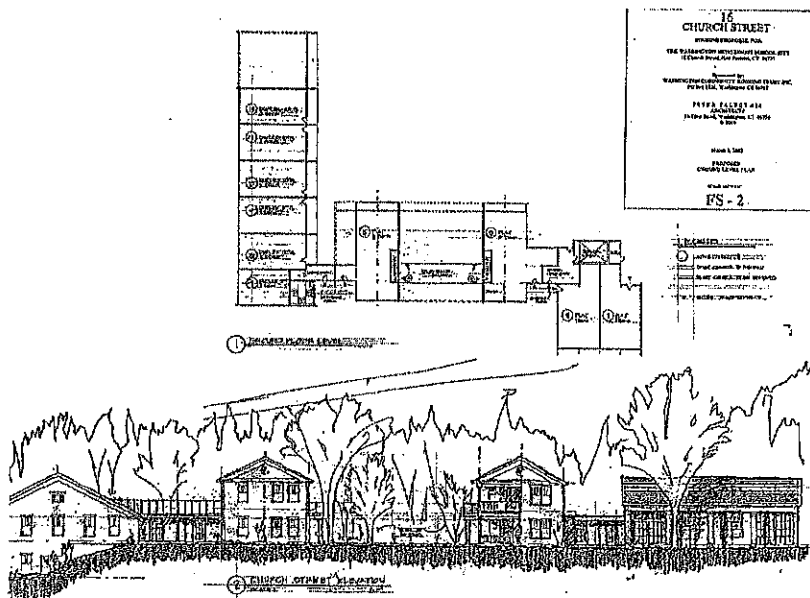


February Board minutes report: "Drawings for housing are not final, but hope to be released by end of March 2002. Fourteen to 16 units are being designed and the school site

seems adequate to supply the water and septic needed. A contract between the Montessori and WCHT board is in process even though no construction on site will be possible for at least a year or more. It was strongly urged that a presentation to the public be made and that the message be NOT LOW INCOME housing, rather than affordable housing without any age limits."

In March 2002, Peter Talbot circulated drawings of the site to the Board and discussed design, scope and suitability of the 12 apartments and townhouses. He believes the project will have modest impact and should add to the character of the neighborhood with the adaptive re-use of old school buildings. Board minutes record: "At present, neighbors are fearful and informative meetings are planned to educate the residents of New Preston as well as the town residents."

The Trustees held a meeting on April 18, 2002 with 40-50 New Preston neighbors at the Congregational Church next door about converting the Montessori school to apts. President Sears and architect Peter Talbot along with other trustees made presentations and fielded questions. Two major issues were raised: People disliked the density of the complex (12 units) and the New Preston Water system had issues. Immediate neighbors expressed fear of losing a certain quality of life and neighborhood closeness. The fragility of the water system was discussed. The idea of a large tank for the proposed apartments to be filled at low-use time was approved by Ron Black the operator of the system. He said such a plan would have no adverse impact on the system. Trustees raised the idea that perhaps the Trust could help upgrade the system. In fact, when you read the saga of the New Preston Water system later, you might conclude with some trust members that WCHT felt it had been 'held hostage' before fulfilling that promise in spades.



Matthew Murgio, Trustee and also a New Preston neighbor of Church Street, sent a report to the Trustees after attending a neighborhood meeting;

On Friday, March 1, a group of residents living in the vicinity of the Montessori School, and calling itself: Concerned Citizens of New Preston, met at the Community Hall. There was a large turnout – probably close to fifty neighbors. I count myself as one of the group. The meeting was well organized by the Shannon's and a lively exchange of views and opinions took place. My impression of the group is a positive one (the Kelly Boling letter to the Litchfield Times notwithstanding – he was not in attendance.) They are open to the concept of new housing and appear to want to make a serious effort to come to grips with any factors they feel might "threaten" them.

I think that what I brought away with me is important to understand if creating new housing on the Montessori site is to be successful. In essence, there were two themes to the meeting. One revolved around the group's "concerns." These are mainly as expected, and can be addressed as the project proceeds. The second is much more damaging and, in my opinion, requires immediate attention. It involves the "approach" to the project that Trust has so far taken. The group's perception is that the project is much further along than the Trust admits and that they have purposely been excluded from the process because the Trust is hiding things that they would find unacceptable. This is causing a bias that the Trust has a hidden agenda and cannot be trusted. Circumstantially, it is not difficult to understand why. Consider the following reasoning that:

- o The Montessori School has confirmed to them that they are in serious negotiations with the Trust.*
- o Peter Talbot, an architect, has been retained by the Trust and a rendering of a new facility exists. Therefore there must be plans and the number of units has been decided.*
- o New Preston Congregational Church has been contacted and a presentation made to them. No one else was "invited"*
- o The New Preston Water Company has been contacted by the people doing the feasibility study and has confirmed using its water for the project.*

So, how do we respond? As I have said earlier I think some sort of brochure/pamphlet should be created that would serve a number of purposes: (1) to clarify our thoughts and put all of us on the "same page" (pun intended); (2) to be given to the press, the interested members of the community, and potential fund-givers etc. If the document could contain a rendering of the new facility it would be a plus. The format might be FAQ (frequently asked questions). The questions would anticipate both easy and difficult questions that might be asked. There are things in here that I have just guessed at. Not knowing the history or politics I've just look at the situation as a new kid on the block. First some up-front thoughts:

In the matter of perception, we need to avoid the use of terms that may trigger misunderstanding and fear on the part of those in the community who are in doubt about what we are trying to accomplish. Specifically, we should avoid the terms: "project," "housing"

"development" and "Montessori School". A more positive image can be created by giving the new facility a distinct name; one that is contemporary and memorable. (Such as was done with Riverwoods) A powerful name can also serve in future publicity and fund raising. One that is suggested, tentatively, uses the street address and incorporates it into a logo:

16Church

NEW PRESTON, CONNECTICUT

In the matter of appearance, we should begin to cultivate the idea of creating a "jewel" in the community. To make 16Church something special, a pocket park (or mini-green) can be designed that incorporates the new structure, the New Preston Church and its Parsonage as a single unified landscape (replacing the ugly tarmac) and even, perhaps, using gaslight lamps and a cobble-like roadway and walks. Investing "charm" in the area should not be a costly thing. If it is uniquely done with flair and an embodiment of a New England village look it can truly be made into a jewel. The more charming it can be presented the less likely the negative comments like the one made on the appearance of Dodge Farms would arise. Somewhere on that document we need to explain who we are and how we fit in and, perhaps, the role we would play. People are not sure whether we are an "official" source, or what.



Trust President Sears wrote to all neighbors in April 2002, inviting them to a meeting to discuss the plans:

The Feasibility Study for 16 Church Street is completed and the Housing Trust wishes to invite you to join others from the New Preston Village neighborhood to hear our plans for creating a community of apartments on the site. The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday April 18th at the New Preston Congregational Church.

Before we go into the meeting it is necessary to clarify a misunderstanding. The options posed by concerned neighbors assume that the money pledged is portable. That is, options presented start with the assumption that the Trust could and would take the money and build elsewhere. This is not the case. We are committed to adaptive reuse of the Montessori buildings into very attractive, high quality apartments/townhouses that will be in keeping with the historic, aesthetic and social qualities of the neighborhood.

Peter Talbot and I appreciate the thought and care you and others have taken to inform us of neighborhood concerns and fears. The Trust believes that the proposed design takes these feelings and thoughts into account. The plan represents a compromise between the opinions about density expressed on March 6th (number of people and apartments) and the Trust's original consideration of up to eighteen units.

May Annual Meeting of WCHT reported that 'twelve apartments and townhouses are being planned, two septic systems in place can support the complex, the New Preston Water Company will provide adequate water supply, consideration is being given to traffic and parking, applications are being presented to the town commissions by the Board, Public hearings will be held in the future. Neighbors in attendance questioned the density and the question of home ownership rather than rentals. Progress has slowed down since adjacent neighbors claim to have a covenant on the eastern side of the property. The Trust will have to clear this up.'

The WCHT application for a special permit was accepted at the August 26th Zoning Board meeting. This permit is required in order to allow a non-profit organization to build higher density housing than standard Zoning regulations stipulate.

Trustee Jack Boyer began preparing a detailed application for a STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) grant to the State of Connecticut. The Town would be the applicant and the Church Street neighborhood would benefit with newly paved roads, new sidewalks, lighting, drainage and parking improvements. This grant proved particularly beneficial to everyone in the area when a new road surface was laid on Church Street after the water main was replaced.

By September 2002, the Trustees began to realize that getting water to the complex was becoming a sticky issue. Board minutes record "The water is our major problem. Quantity is plentiful, but the delivery to most New Preston residents is poor. New Preston Water Company (NPWC) and its operator R.J. Black have been contacted. Our plans accommodate the units intended, but we are hoping to make the system accommodate the other homes that are on the water system now. WCHT made efforts to begin conversations with the NPWC leadership to 'join forces to solve the system's problems.' The current system is very fragile."

NPWC was an old, small water system that distributed water from a well on New Preston Hill down Church Street to Hinckley Road and down New Preston Hill Road to the commercial center of the village. Volunteers, customers in the neighborhood, who hired R. J. BLACK AND COMPANY to keep the system running, managed the water company. The neighbor closest to the supply occasionally had to go up the hill to clean leaves and debris out of the cistern to keep the water flowing.

Water supply source still at issue



Todd Hoagland / Register-American
 Simone Bourke, president of the New Preston Water Company, expresses concerns about construction of an affordable housing complex by the Washington Community Housing Trust during Wednesday night's public meeting of the zoning commission at Bryan Memorial Town Hall in Washington, Conn. Attorney Robert L. Fisher, Jr., (front row far right), and Jack Boyer, Washington Community Housing Trust member, next to Fisher, spoke on behalf of the trust at the meeting.

Affordable housing trust, city differ on estimated costs

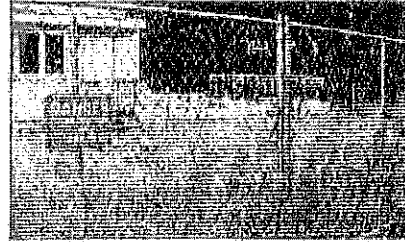
By Sarah Sparks
 Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON, Conn. — The Washington Community Housing Trust broke ground Thursday on a new affordable housing complex on Church Street, but grants to join the units to a water supply are still waterlogged.

At least \$100,000 in work is needed to bring the 11 units onto the New Preston Water Company's system, as well as who will pay for the upgrades.

Housing Trust President Dick Sears said the proposal if city has offered to pay \$100,000 toward the installation of a new storage tank and to place a 1-inch-wide water main beneath Church Street with a 6 to 8-inch pipe.

The water company estimates the upgrades will cost more than



Sarah Sparks / Register-American
 Construction starts Thursday morning on a new 11-unit affordable housing complex at 10 Church St. in New Preston. The Washington Community Housing Trust, which is building the complex, still is in negotiations with the New Preston Water Company over the unit's water system.

\$120,000, including a new back-up pump, concrete pad, and other upgrades, but if it does, she said the developer should pay for having the water system up to par.

Please turn to 2B, WATER

Ten years after the Church Street complex was built, Jack Boyer recalls two years of frustration in trying to negotiate a fair settlement for repairs to the ancient water system. After years of haggling, WCHT ended up paying for an entirely new system. In Boyer's words: *"They saw an opportunity for a 'hold-up' and just stuck it to us. We re-piped service to every house on the street, ran a new water main, well, and storage tank. The system was very poor. I remember once going to a meeting at the church and went to wash out my coffee cup at the kitchen sink, and it trickled out. I said, Oh my gosh, they have no water. Several people put 'booster' pumps into their homes and when they kicked on, other people on the street lost water pressure. They held us hostage and we paid for the whole thing. We rebuilt the system from the wells on Averill property on New Preston Road to the end of Hinckley Road."*

The next chapter details the arduous process of securing water from the New Preston Water Company.

In the fall of 2002 the Trust began preparing an application for a zoning permit. In a letter addressing the 'neighborhood impact' requirement of the special permit process, President Sears identifies these typical concerns and issues:

I am writing regarding the Washington Community Housing Trust's application to build 12 affordable apartments at Church Street, New Preston. Specifically, I wish to address the Neighborhood Impact standard of the zoning laws.

The WCHT application represents a plan for affordable housing that is consistent with both the Town of Washington's Plan of Conservation and Development and recent Housing Survey. These documents provide rationale for a need for affordable housing and its development in scattered sites around town. The latter document specifically mentions the desirability of creating housing in or near town centers.

WCHT leadership has held many conversations and met on numerous occasions with concerned local neighbors. We discussed plans for creating up to 18 apartments on the site with the leadership of the New Preston Congregational Church and several neighbors in January. In ensuing weeks we listened to concerns presented by neighbors who own contiguous properties. In April we called a meeting attended by 25 or 30 neighbors to explain our plans for reconstruction of the site and to address their concerns. Neighbors have had numerous individual conversations with WCHT board members. In preparing the proposal before the commission, WCHT has considered neighbor's concerns about population density, traffic, parking, property values, septic and water.

Twelve apartments (23 bedrooms) is an appropriate scale for this neighborhood. Conversations with the former First Selectman about converting this site to housing projected that more than 20 units would be necessary if state or federal funding was to be used. WCHT has reduced the size of the proposal from its estimates of 18 to 20 units to the present twelve apartments. This is a good number for this site and is the minimum number to make this economically feasible.

The twenty-three bedrooms will house between 27 & 30 residents of all ages. We base this on the fact that Dodge Farms and Ellsworth Apartments have an average density of 1.18 persons per bedroom. (23 bedrooms x 1.18 persons per bedroom = 27.1 total population). The present Hinckley Road/Church Street neighborhood has approximately 59 residents living in 21 dwellings, housing 60 bedrooms. Current density in the neighborhood averages one person per bedroom, slightly less than is being proposed.

For comparison, a similar high-density 'town center' with a variety of rental and homeowner dwellings exists at the Washington Green. Buildings around the Green include the church, parish house, a commercial building (Post Office and store), 6 owner occupied houses, and three rental properties housing a doctor's office and at least 10 rental units. The proposed housing at Church Street will not adversely affect the current residential character of the neighborhood.

Traffic will be greatly reduced. This is true certainly when compared with current high usage times (when the school is in session more than 200 cars per day). It is also true when compared to the school's usages averaged out over the course of a year (180 days x 200 cars/day = 36,000 cars per year/365 days = 100 cars/day). The proposal makes adequate provision for parking, and the whole design is intended to aesthetically complement the historic nature of the church and neighborhood.

Some have expressed concern about a perceived 'transience' of apartment resident, suggesting that apartments encourage high turnover of residents. Following this thought, people fear this will de-stabilize a neighborhood. In fact, in Washington, WCHT has found that this is not the case. In its six years of operation the average tenancy is four years at Dodge Farms apartments. At Ellsworth Apartments, owned by the First Congregational Church, average tenancy is longer.

WCHT makes careful tenant selection a top priority—both to respect members of the apartment community and neighboring residents. WCHT ensures that tenants are responsible (by checking past landlord references) and financially able (using credit checks) to meet their rental obligations. Rental contracts and resident handbooks clearly delineate owner/resident duties and obligations and rules are strictly enforced. WCHT is committed to providing affordable housing that creates healthy living communities within the town. WCHT's experience at Dodge Farms and Riverwoods Senior Housing indicate that there will be a mixture of incomes and rents because some people will pay a base rent amount (or even a lower, subsidized rent) and others will pay more than the base amount because their annual income is higher. The population of the proposed apartments will be very similar to the current make up of the neighborhood.

There will be no adverse affect on nearby property values. Liddy Adams, a nearby neighbor and respected Real Estate Broker states: "From a Real Estate Brokerage standpoint, I have been asked numerous times over the past several months as the affect the project might have on property values. From an historical standpoint, affordable housing complexes have not negatively affected adjacent or neighboring property values, in surrounding towns as well as Washington. Dodge Farm is a perfect example, as several new construction projects were completed on adjacent lots and sold in the \$300,000-\$400,000 range. I will say that the longer a "For Sale" signs exists on the (Montessori) school property, and the grass continues to grow higher, and the paint continues to peel—then the red flag goes up for potential purchasers to think "negatively".

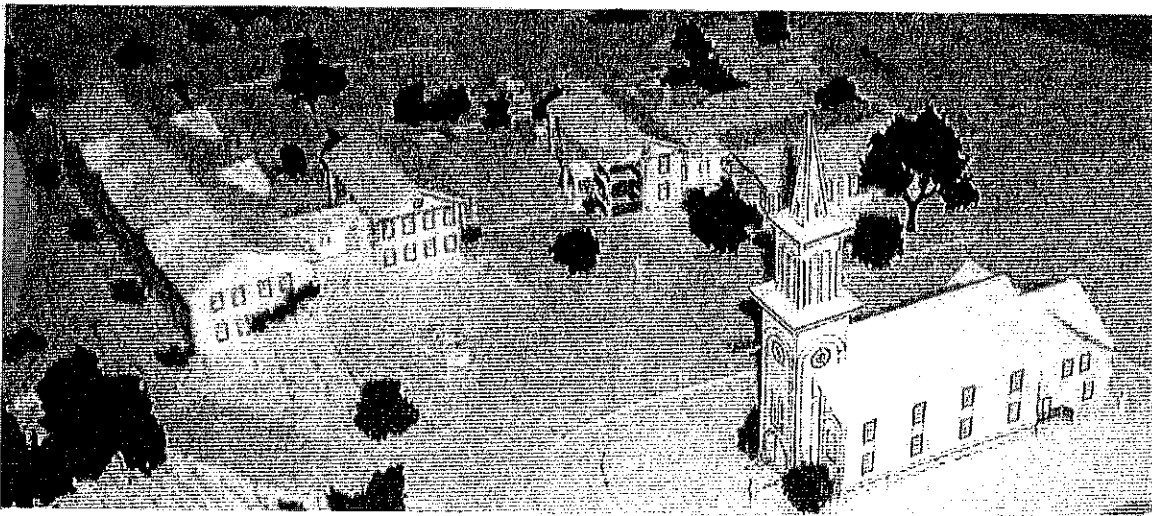
In the larger picture, evidence indicates that homes near apartments do not lose their value. Research in the Journal of American Planning Association found that locating public housing units in 'predominantly White, middle-income neighborhoods had no discernable effects on surrounding property values. Additionally, a comparison of home owners living near the public housing and those living elsewhere reported similar levels of satisfaction with their neighborhoods." (JAPA, 65(1): 27-49)

New Preston Water Company: Ronald J. Black, the NP Water Company's manger, rendered an initial opinion stating that there is sufficient supply and flow of water for this proposal. However, in discussion with neighbors WCHT, learned that satisfaction with the local water system performance is very low. WCHT paid for an engineer's comprehensive pressure and flow analysis that concluded there is sufficient supply but limited pressure and flow of water for the current 21 users. The current system is very fragile. WCHT has begun conversations with the NP Water Company leadership about joining forces to solve the system's problems. Additionally, WCHT is working with the Town Selectmen to secure a STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) State of Connecticut grant to pave the neighborhood roads,

install sidewalks, lighting, recreational and parking improvements, and solve drainage and other concerns. WCHT believes the Church Street proposal is an excellent way to provide more affordable housing for Washington.

The Trustees sent a December 2002 letter to the community regarding the Church Street plans, asking people to come to a Dec. 16th public hearing before the Zoning Commission. The mailing was sent with a fact sheet with a picture of an architectural model. Trustee John Millington insisted that a visual representation would be very helpful. The model was created and displayed in several locations in Town over the next months. Below is the introductory text of the information sheet, headlined by an artist's model of the site:

CHURCH STREET, NEW PRESTON



The Washington Community Housing Trust proposes to create twelve apartments on the corner of Church Street and Hinckley Road at the site of the Washington Montessori School. The school building footprint will be significantly reduced and divided into two structures, thus opening a view from the church into a common yard on the south. The design creates the feel of a village green with architecture compatible with the Congregational Church and parsonage. The apartment community complements the aesthetic and historic qualities of the locale and will easily integrate into the existing neighborhood.

At the December 16, 2002 Zoning Commission Public Hearing President Sears and Architect Peter Talbot used the scale model to show the proposed complex of 1-3BR, 2 HP apartments, 3-2 BR, 6 2BR Townhouse apartments. Additionally, a 10,000-gallon water cistern for fire-fighting will be included.

Mr. Shannon, immediate neighbor on Hinckley Road, made a slide presentation, stating that he "represented 44 New Preston area residents who were against the application. He submitted a petition with 153 signatures against the project and a copy of his slide

presentation for each commissioner. He stated that the residents he represents "do not object to affordable housing in general, but to the size and scale of this project because it does not fit in with the neighborhood." Ten objections are noted in the minutes of the proceedings.

December 25, 2002

VOICES

by Marc Ryan Daft
WASHINGTON — The large hall in Washington's Bryan Memorial Town Hall has fantastic acoustics and voices carry very well.

On Monday December 16, though, a microphone was used to ensure that all those with a voice would be heard equally.

Between 150 and 200 residents were in attendance when the Zoning Commission hosted a public hearing on an affordable housing project proposed by the Washington Community Housing Trust, which is planned for the site currently occupied by the Washington Montessori School.

Occupying the front of the hall, directly in front of the stage, was the Zoning Commission. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Henry Martin who proceeded to define the ground rules of how the public hearing would function.

To set an agenda, one that began with reading of all documented correspondence with the Zoning Commission concerning the affordable housing plan referenced into the taped and written record.

Affordable Housing Proposal Detailed at Washington Hearing

That would be followed with a presentation by the Washington Community Housing Trust president, Richard Sears, about the trust's plans for the project.

After his presentation, a concerned group of neighbors, led by William Shannon, would present reasons and documentation as to why they feel this project is wrong for their neighborhood.

And, lastly, the floor would be opened to public comment concerning the issue.

Mr. Sears, during his presentation, called the project an "adaptive reuse of the present building . . . It's kind of like recycling."

The project, which is funded privately, reduces the footprint of the existing Montessori School building by 47 percent; it would be able to accommodate up to 30 residents.

The housing proposal, for

now, would be home to closer to 27 people.

The 3,465-acre lot would contain 23 bedrooms housed in two, one-bedroom apartments; nine, two-bedroom apartments; and one, three-bedroom apartment.

Mr. Sears brought up issues concerning public enterprise that would facilitate the use of these apartments, mainly the site's infrastructure, the main reason for the project's location.

He recognized that currently, the New Preston neighborhood has insufficient water-flow to make this project feasible.

He told residents and Zoning Commission members that the WCHT would work with the New Preston Water Company to improve the "archaic delivery system" now in use, to one that is up-to-date and fully functional.

Mr. Sears also addressed an

issue that many residents have been concerned about, who exactly is this project for and who exactly qualifies for affordable housing?

Connecticut statutes dictate that affordable housing is any housing that costs 30 percent of a family of four's monthly income.

Others who are eligible are those who earn 80 percent or less than the area's median income, in which case, again, their rent would be based upon 30 percent of that income.

The area's median income, although high by general stan-

Another abutting neighbor, Mr. Cannavaro, objected to the size and scale of the project. A nearby resident, Mr. Anderson, opposed the project and "Thought the apartments were an unwelcome and out of place island in the center of his neighborhood." Simone Rourke, a Hinckley Road resident and president of the New Preston Water Company, expressed concerns about the driveway onto Hinckley Road, landscaping, and stated that "the WCHT did not take the comments of area residents into consideration when it drafted its plan, which she said was dictated by the donors of the funds for the units instead of what was in the best interests of the neighborhood." Similarly, next door neighbor Mrs. Shannon "complained the donors were controlling the project rather than the needs of the town." Mr. Rourke, asked "how much money had been donated for the project, what the money would be used for, and thought if a \$3 million dollar donation had been made it would pay for all costs." Chairman Martin stated financing was not a zoning issue.

Attorney James Kelly said, "WCHT deserves enormous thanks for its efforts to provide affordable housing in Town and to keep this proposal a modest size since any developer could have proposed a much larger complex." The public hearing was continued to the next month.

Washington zoners stall on housing

Plan would convert school into apartments

By Sarah Sparks
Staff Writer
WASHINGTON, Conn. — Although stacks of written testimony piled up at the second public hearing for an affordable housing complex, the Zoning Commission came to no conclusion about the project.
 The commission closed its hearing Monday evening without a vote on the Washington Community Housing Trust's plan to convert the Montessori

School into 12 affordable apartments. Commissioners voted instead to consult with town attorney Tom Byrne and hold a special meeting Jan. 27 to discuss the project.
 Richard Sears, chairman of the housing trust, said he was pleased with the hearings.

"I respect (Chairman Hank Martin's) ability to welcome information and opinions from all quarters. He invited all of the commission members to deeply and thoughtfully consider the issue."
 Both sides of the debate have submitted more than 100 new documents

for and against the project since the last public hearing, Dec. 10.
 The 41 neighbors who oppose the project urged the commission to cut the number of apartments in half. Any higher density would cause dangerous traffic problems on the narrow, twisting roads around the school,

according to Bill Shannon, head of the neighborhood committee. The building is on the corner of Church Street and Hinckley Road in the New Preston section.
 Fitzgerald & Halliday, a Hartford consulting firm, compared the traffic at Washington Primary School (a smaller but nearby public school) and a 12-unit apartment complex. The

Please turn to 5B, PLAN

Later, the Trust learned that neighbors had mounted a concerted effort to uncover the names of the 'anonymous' donors in order to get to them directly and beg them to withdraw their support, and fund something in another location. Antagonists greatly resented the Trust's keeping the donor's identity secret, as the donor had wished.

WASHINGTON PLAN DRAWING CRITICISM

New Preston Housing Called Too Intrusive.

By DAVID LOMBINO
WASHINGTON—In front of roughly 100 people at a public hearing Monday night, the Washington Community Housing Trust presented its application to construct 12 affordable housing apartments on the current site of the Washington Montessori School in New Preston. A group of opponents, led by Bill Shannon, immediately outlined a list of concerns.

Decision Postponed
 After both presentations and more than an hour of questions and, at times, heated discussion, the Zoning Commission decided to postpone a decision until members could visit the site and collect more information on several issues. The commission is to seek details about potential threats to the water supply, the proposed landscape buffering, and the parking

Pros and cons of affordable housing plan offered at Washington hearing

Plans to convert the Washington Montessori School into 12 affordable housing units are drawing opposition from residents in the neighborhood surrounding the school.

The Washington Community Housing Trust is seeking a special zoning permit to replace the school, which is changing its location, with two buildings.

A Dec. 16 hearing was continued to next Monday at 7:30 p.m. upstairs in Bryan Memorial Town Hall.

Richard Sears, president of the Washington Community Housing Trust, said at the December hearing that plans for the complex include one three-bedroom apartment, two handicapped access one-bedroom apartments, three two-bedroom units, and six two-bedroom townhouse apartments on the 3.5-acre parcel.

Mr. Sears said the Housing Trust was attempting to harmonize plans with the historic and

aesthetic characteristics of the neighborhood and would provide landscaping and buffering.

Officials said rents would be set according to the state affordable housing regulations, and units would be permanently deed restricted. It is estimated the complex will have 30 residents of various ages and incomes.

Proponents say traffic congestion will decrease since the existing school has a yearly average of 100 trips per day and the 12 apartments would have far fewer trips per day. Several letters in support of the project were submitted to the Zoning Commission.

Bill Shannon, a Hinckley Road resident who represents 44 New Preston area residents opposed to the application, said the size and scale of the proposed project does not fit with the neighborhood and should be smaller.

According to minutes of the

meeting, Mr. Shannon submitted a petition with 153 signatures against the project. He also argued that traffic congestion in the area would increase and that the narrow rural road network with hills, poor sight lines and numerous driveways is inadequate.

Others argued that the complex would lower existing property values and block the view of the nearby historically and architecturally significant church.

Mr. Sears said the Trust is committed to provide housing opportunities for people with significant ties to Washington.

Proposed apartments range from 995 to 1,323 square feet.

Supporters said Washington needs 200 affordable housing units to reach the state's 10-percent goal. Several letters of support were submitted at the Dec. 16 hearing.

—Lynda Wellman

Spectrum 1/10/2003

On January 13, 2003 a second Zoning Commission Public Hearing was held. The Trust presented the results of a traffic study required by the ZC, since the neighbors had expressed grave concern about the amount of traffic generated from residents of the complex. This request, on the surface of it, seemed reasonable for the proposed infusion into a residential neighborhood of twelve apartments, housing perhaps thirty people. However, the Montessori School, the current occupier of the property, had for years created two bottle-necking periods of high traffic, morning and afternoon, each school day. Hundreds of cars and school buses came and went to 16 Church Street. The Trust was also

required to present the reasons why twelve is the appropriate number of apartments for the site. The Public Hearing was closed without official action. President Sears wrote to the board after the hearing: "We are proud of our plan and confident that this addition to Washington's affordable housing will become more than an accepted part of the community in the years ahead. It will be seen as a model for safe, comfortable, attractive and affordable living."

On February 24, 2003 the Washington Zoning Commission approved the site with 13 conditions, one of which was the demand that the complex be scaled back to eleven apartments, from the request for twelve. Later, Chairman Henry Martin, in confidence to members of the Trust, said that giving up one apartment was a concession to the neighbors. This 'bone' that the Zoning Commission threw to the neighborhood was to appease their opposition to the supposed 'outsized' scale of the complex and to allay their fears about traffic and sight lines near the stop sign at the Hinckley and Church Street intersection. WCHT's architect went back to the drawing board to revise the design to remove one unit from the original plan. The project was approved under the Affordable Housing Appeals Act (AHHA) law, allowing for increased density on town lots.

The March 26, 2003 Republican-American newspaper article headline read: "Revised housing plan gets official, neighborly approval." "WCHT submitted a new design to address conditions the Commission attached to an earlier approval. The Zoning Board chair, Hank Martin, said: 'I feel the WCHT has generated a great deal of goodwill' by revising the proposal for housing. 'It's great, it's elegant, it's attractive—it's substantially better than what we had on the table before.'"

Mr. Martin's superlatives notwithstanding, the exquisitely designed complex was altered very little from its first iterations to the plan recently approved. The ZC essentially stripped off one apartment and threw it as a 'bone' to the loud, barking opposition of the neighbors who uniformly said they would have been happy with a complex significantly smaller in scope. The 'supposed' reason to remove the old gymnasium building, causing a re-design and loss of one apartment, was that it would improve 'site lines' for traffic and therefore, increased safety for children. Everyone knows there are no traffic problems at that intersection, and children's safety was never a 'real' issue. Anyone who follows affordable housing initiatives knows however, that NIMBY is a real issue, often sugar-coated with the emperor's clothing of traffic, lighting, children's safety and parking concerns. The above mentioned article continued by quoting the most vocal of opponents, immediate neighbor to the south, Bill Shannon, who said, "We do agree that it is a better design than was (first) approved. It looks better and it addresses some of the safety concerns."

In its March board meeting, the Trustees noted "the search for contractors will begin shortly. Tentative moving out date for Montessori School is June 14th. Now that the site is becoming a reality our task should be to 'build bridges' with the discontented residents. We want to keep the neighborhood special for all who are living there now and who will become future residents at 16 Church Street."

Ruscoe-Sedito Construction Company, of Washington, was hired as Construction Manager. The major issue of the water system remained and the Board vowed to continue to work with Judea Water Company and the Town's Board of Selectmen. The STEAP grant is a major part of the resolution to the water supply issue as a new water main would be laid before the road and drainage improvements are made. The public voted at a town meeting on July 17, 2003 to accept the STEAP grant.

The September 29 Trustee's minutes reflect: "Two major issues have delayed construction on the site. The water problem is our first major set back. The neighborhood wants the Housing Trust to do the entire system and follow the State's plan for water distribution. The State has NO plan! WCHT has offered to replace the water distribution within the school site only, which is not in agreement with most of the local residents. The second set back is the lawsuit by neighbors Roger and Laura Cannavaro that calls for an immediate stop on construction. A 'Cease and Desist' order has been filed by the law firm of Pellegrini and Moots, LLC. According to the Cannavaro covenant on their deed, the housing will be on their tiny portion of land when the building is being torn down and their covenant states that only 2 single family houses with garages and a fixed amount of parking can be on the site. Once the construction is completed, the new complex will not be on this portion of land. Bill Fairbairn will be contacted and represent the Housing Trust on this major issue. WCHT board will work to resolve both issues."

Site work continued through October even though the Cannavaro suit against WCHT was unresolved. Board members Bill Fairbairn, Jack Boyer and Architect Talbot went to the state Health Department to resolve the dispute over the water issues. Resident Simone Rourke and Ron Black of the NP Water Company also attended. The water issue must be resolved before a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued.

At the October 2003 Trustees meeting, there was a lengthy discussion about the "WCHT Image." New Trustee, Liddy Adams said the picture the Housing Trust has given to town residents is "They move on no matter what residents say and it is the 'rich' that are given priority over housing issues. The rentals from Dodge Farm and Riverwoods are a tax burden and our focus on building sites has been invasive to the neighborhood." She continued, "The negatives are being expressed openly by many who do not have the facts and the news media seems to concentrate on these rather than the positives." The Board vowed to change its image, show the facts, and declared, "Doing the moral and right thing for the town is our goal and we shall continue on the path. Once a building site is up and running, most of the disapproval fades and this will be our hope for the New Preston housing project." President Dick Sears gave "recognition to the members for the work done by the WCHT, began seventeen yeas ago with a small group of ministers and interested parties. It was only an idea with no money and no land. Through tireless effort and persistence, the reality of affordable housing was made possible. The future is to continue with housing, but to concentrate on single family units."

The approval of the eleven apartments in the Church Street complex pushed Washington over the 2% threshold of total affordable housing units in Town, giving the town a 4-year

moratorium on unwanted development by for-profit contractors under the Connecticut Affordable Housing law.

By the beginning of 2004, things were moving along. The building committee was meeting every two weeks with the architect, site work was in process, foundations were in and framing would begin immediately, weather permitting. The water system was being worked on with the cooperation of Ron Black & Co.



A tenant selection process was established and Community Housing Management hired to manage the 'rent up' process. The apartments ranged in size from 1,080 to 1,500 square feet and base rental prices ranged from \$650 to 1,100/mo. The complex would be managed in accordance with the State's Affordable Housing laws. Occupancy was anticipated for November. A walk through for area residents was held on July 31, 2004.

Building details: Ruscoe-Sedito Construction, Inc., a Washington based firm, provided construction management. The inclusion of local area trades and businesses was extensive. Peter Talbot, AIA, conceived the plans for adaptive re-use of the old school buildings and coordinated all phases of the project from beginning to end.

The water issue was eventually resolved with WCHT paying more than \$160,000 for a completely new distribution system for Church Street and Hinckley Road, along with a new well, storage tank and pumps.

The Certificate of Occupancy was granted on January 10, 2005. The original zoning permit date was January 20, 2003.

A Dedication Ceremony was held at the site and commemorated by this inscription on a brass plaque mounted on a rock on the lawn: "This family housing is dedicated to the community of Washington, and to those who gave of their time, skills and financial resources to make it possible. February 26, 2005, Washington Community Housing Trust"

In New Preston Housing Trust Unveils 16 Church

by John Addyman
NEW PRESTON — The people living in its 11 apartments may never quite appreciate it, but the 16 Church development is of pivotal importance to the future of the town of Washington.
The effort to get it built — something that took years of fund-raising, land-use board approvals, and a lot of conversations with neighbors — was worth it, based on the looks of the faces of the people who got it done.

Architect Peter Talbot, builder Brad Sodito and Washington Community Housing Trust members Matt Murgio, John Millington, Bill Fairbairn, Chris Charles, Phyllis and John Allen, Marty Meyer and many others were all glowing as the apartments opened for public view on Saturday in special ceremonies.

For the town, the development represents an important statistical category in the effort to keep Washington a picture-postcard rural community — the category of affordable housing in the town's total inventory.

If the town can't improve its numbers of affordable housing units available, a developer can come in and virtually rewrite

zoning on the spot to make up for the deficit.

Nobody was worrying too much about that on Saturday.

The mood was buoyant.

"How sweet it is," said Mr. Murgio, who addressed a crowd of perhaps 60 people who came to the grand opening tape-cutting in front of the complex's offices.

Nine of the 11 apartments have tenants; two more are waiting and one of them was on the afternoon's tour.

"We are proud of what we accomplished," Mr. Murgio said.

With the Dodge Farm and Riverwoods units already built, the trust now has 37 affordable housing units available, all funded privately. The cost for 16 Church is estimated at more than \$3 million.

After everyone had toured the grounds, members of the New Preston Congregational Church opened their doors, and brought out the food for an afternoon of community thankfulness.

The Rev. Bob Hawley set the tone in a short invocation, where he noted the strength and commitment of everyone involved in the project had benefited from a "vast portion" of blessings.

He commended the "hearts and



Matt Murgio addressed neighbors, friends and benefactors who came to see the grand opening of the 16 Church apartment development on Saturday. The 11-unit structures, built by the Washington Community Housing Trust specifically for town residents of moderate incomes, are part of a new housing wave that is important to Washington's future. (Addyman photos)

hands that built it, and the hearts and minds that conceived it." He said the apartments across the street added to the community in the area.

Mr. Millington, who was involved in the project from the first conceptual moments,

The descriptive brochure about the apartments reads: "Built on the site of the former Montessori School in New Preston, 16 Church is a community housing complex brought forth by the WCHT with funds privately donated for the purpose of providing modest affordable housing for residents of all age groups and family size.

"From its inception the focus of the project has been on the people who have grown up in the area, who work here, who have spend their lives, here, and who, more often tan not, can no longer afford to live in our town.

"The Trust commissioned an outstanding local architect to create buildings that would blend into the community and honor the neighborhood's rural character. With the aid of a state grant, the area's infrastructure has been upgraded and linked with the center of historic New Preston, thus imbibing the area with the character of a New England village green.

"The complex consists of two buildings. The West Building, at street level, contains three apartments and an administrative office. One apt is handicapped accessible and one is adaptable for that purpose. The East Building contains eight apartments...six units are duplex apartments that grace the slope of the land facing east both buildings, clad in colors that harmonize with the seasons, are constructed with quality materials that require low maintenance. Within the apartments are generous in size and convenient in layout. Throughout, the buildings have been designed to harness the advantages of energy conservation. With it all, 16 Church is something special: a "jewel" in a crown. The WCHT is proud to be its sponsor."

OTHER WCHT ATTEMPTS TO CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WCHT Trustees were intrepid in pursuing every prospective opportunity to fulfill the organization's mission. Whenever word of a potential parcel of land or building reached a board member, eager volunteers began an investigation. By word of mouth and in its newsletters, the Trust urged citizens to join the search. Over the years the Trustees walked, measured and studied dozens of buildings and parcels of undeveloped land, including the following:

WYKEHAM RISE SCHOOL: A 1987 newspaper article noted that WCHT "is looking into converting the soon-to-close Wykeham Rise school into condominiums for needy families and elderly residents. The non-profit group has 'a lot of interest in the possibility of the site for suitable housing,' said a trust member, the Rev. Richard Sears. 'We want to throw our hat in the ring for consideration when the school's board of trustees decides what to do with the property.' Nothing came of the proposal.

PINE LANE MANOR: In 1988, the trustees investigated the idea of purchasing the Pine Lane Manor, a senior residence hotel on Route 202 in New Preston. David Simpson, Trustee, contacted the churches to see if there was interest in discussing the purchase of the building. The plan, which did not materialize for lack of funding and interest from churches, was to convert the building into a number of apartments.

NEW PRESTON PLAYING FIELD - 1988: Trust leaders considered a potential building site for several apartments on the west side of the Town field across from the Washington Montessori School on Church Street in New Preston. The idea was not pursued.

NEW PRESTON COMMUNITY HOUSE - 1988: The Trust began three and a half years of conversations with the Town and the New Preston Women's Club, who jointly managed the property and its trust fund, about converting the second floor of the Community House into two apartments. William Worcester, architect, was hired to design two units in this building on the corner of Church Street and New Preston Hill. Finally, in 1992, negotiations ended when the Women's Club voted to not let WCHT create apartments in the building.

QUARRY RIDGE CONDOMINIUMS - 1988: The Trust began investigating the possibility of attracting a State grant to purchase the bankrupt Quarry Ridge Condominium development on Mygatt Road in Marbledale. Trustee Jack Boyer and Town Finance Committee Chairman George Ward travelled to the Department of Housing in Hartford to seek funding. It took more than a year but the word came back that the acquisition and building costs of \$192,000 per unit was too much for the State to grant. The concept was nixed.

STEEP ROCK LAND TRANSFER: A newspaper article of 1988 reads: "The Steep Rock Association announced on Tuesday, May 10th that it has reached an agreement in principle with WCHT to propose to the Town the sale of 10 acres on the corner of Blackville Road and Route 47 for use as a site for the construction of affordable housing." The Trust was working with the town to file a Community Development Block grant under the Small Cities

program to acquire the land, but a required public meeting was not held before the deadline for filing. The article noted "the Blackville Road site has a steep incline that might make it difficult for drivers to spot oncoming traffic." John Marsh, First Selectman, was not supportive of the effort. He is quoted in other articles as saying, "The selectmen have enough to do without getting into the housing business." He actually put a scare into citizen's minds with the thought that a 'traffic light' might be needed at that location!--a dreaded idea in a town with only one traffic signal in the whole town! The site, above and behind the fairly new Town highway garages, would have been a fine location for multiple apartments, but was abandoned by WCHT. Owned by Steep Rock, the parcel was eventually traded to the Town, as planned, for acreage fronting the Shepaug River, along Bee Brook Road (Route 47) next to the Washington Volunteer Fire Company building.

WASHINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL PROPERTY - 1998: Trustees contacted the Shepaug School District Region 12 School board to see if several acres adjacent to the primary school would be available for senior housing. The site was ultimately judged unsuitable.

OLD TOWN GARAGE SITE ON TITUS ROAD - 1998: The town highway garages had been recently relocated to a property on Blackville Road, leaving the former site vacant. Trustees thought this location would be very suitable for senior housing, as it was adjacent to all the amenities of the village. However, the site could not be built upon as it was under an order by the CT Department of Environmental Protection to allow road salt that has been seeping down into the Shepaug aquifer for decades to disperse. This idea was dropped.

STEEP ROCK HOUSE - 2002: Four years later, The Steep Rock Association offered an old, abandoned colonial house on Christian Street, New Preston with the provision that it be moved to another site or demolished. Unfortunately, the house needed \$90,000 worth of restoration work, and moving was prohibitively expensive. After several trustees toured the building and found the project not suitable, the idea was abandoned.

TOWN OWNED PROPERTIES: Over the years the Town of Washington had acquired a number of properties, scattered throughout town that were not developed nor being used for municipal purposes. With the support of First Selectman Alan Chapin, the trustees checked out possible properties but found nothing suitable and dropped the idea.

SWISS HOSPITALITY INSTITUTE: In July of 2003 Trustee minutes record that "The Institute of Hospitality (formerly Wykeham Rise School on Wykeham Road) is on the market and would be ideal for some type of housing. President Dick and a few other board members will be meeting with the schools' president Alan Greene to discuss the future and perhaps make some possible recommendations for what the site might become." Trustees again concluded that the cost of acquiring the property and the scope of a housing development would make this opportunity unfeasible.

ELLSWORTH APARTMENTS: Two years later in 2005, WCHT had conversations with the First Congregational Church about the possibility of the Trust purchasing the seven Ellsworth Apartments on Bee Brook Road in the Depot. The Trust inspected the buildings, did a financial analysis, appraisal, and other due diligence. As there were many deferred

maintenance issues uncovered, it decided not to try and raise the \$100,000 the Church wanted for the units.

MOORE HILL: A site, dubbed Moore Hill by the Trust, that looked extremely suitable for several single-family homes near the village center of New Preston became available in 2005. Leaders began investigating the 31-acre property that local resident, Owen Moore, was offering for sale at \$450,000. One concept proposed by Matt Murgio, then WCHT President, was to: "reclaim the pond, provide picnic area, landscape with wildflowers, create a hamlet with 6 to 8 modular affordable houses, set aside two parcels for sale, include a number of artist's lofts, similar to carriage houses." The Trustees agreed it was a complex undertaking, and WCHT did not have the in-house skills or finances to undertake the project. The economics just didn't work, though Matt pressed the WCHT board to seriously consider the development of this rare parcel abutting a village center. Ultimately the Conservation Commission of the Town of Washington seized the opportunity and promoted using the town's Open Space Fund to permanently preserve the entire parcel. A Town meeting ratified that proposal. To the Trustees, this parcel situated adjacent to a highly dense village center was much more suitable to modest housing than becoming an isolated piece of preserved swamp and hillside on a busy state highway. Another affordable housing opportunity was lost to the Town.

MYFIELD DEVELOPMENT - : Two for profit housing developers and local residents, Winston Fowlkes and Joseph Gitterman purchased a 13-acre parcel on Mygatt Road in Marbledale. They planned to construct Myfield, a development of four limited equity condominium units along with a number of market rate units in a 'set-aside' project under the State of Connecticut's 80-30g affordable housing laws. This law allows private developers to ignore local zoning laws regarding unit density, in towns that do not have enough affordable housing, as long as public health requirements were fulfilled (potable water and sewage disposal). WCHT agreed to act as the 'designated affordable housing administrator' for the project. It's job would be to see that the owners obeyed state requirements for fairly marketing thirty percent of the units that were designated as 'affordable' and sold to persons whose incomes were below 80% of the state median income level. Later, WCHT withdrew its support of this project when asked by the owners to 'qualify' a family that had not been chosen in a fair and open manner as required by law.

POTTER FARM PROPOSITION: In the fall of 2006, town Selectmen, trustees of WCHT and the Potter family began negotiations to purchase the Potter farm property off of Old Litchfield Road (Route 109) for open space preservation, private development and several affordable single family house lots. Former WCHT President, Richard Sears, had been elected to the office of First Selectman in November 2005. Under his leadership, a year later (November 2006), Washington's Board of Selectmen initially voted unanimously to present the Potter Farm Proposition for the public's consideration at a Town Meeting in January of 2007. From a fact sheet developed by the Selectmen, we read: "The Potter Farm, an internationally acclaimed Holstein dairy farm, is for sale. John and Tim Potter, ready for retirement, tried various ways to keep the farm intact, but to no avail. The Potters approached the Selectmen to ask if the Town might be interested in preserving much of the farmland. The Selectmen negotiated a proposition that provides lots for affordable housing;

limits further development to 3 additional homes (3 already exist) by the purchase of development rights to 97 acres, and permanently preserve 78 acres of farmland free from development. "

WCHT was working with the Town on this complex conservation/development proposal to provide five limited-equity affordable housing lots, conserve open forest and open space and offer several market rate building lots for sale. The proposition costs \$2 million, \$1.5 million from public funds and \$500,000 from the WCHT.

Three informational meetings were held in November, December and January. A great deal of opposition to the proposition arose to the affordable housing component, a challenge to the financial projections, environmental concerns, lack of public access to the preserved open space. Much of the negative energy came in the form of strong NIMBY push-back from nearby residents who claimed "this proposal will so clearly have a negative impact on a neighborhood comprised of a historic district, numerous historic homes, and a designated scenic road." (Quoted from a December 28, 2006 letter to the Board of Selectmen and all area newspapers, signed by 48 residents who lived within ¼ mile of the farm.) Several opponents cornered the First Selectman in his office, threatening that he would 'lose his job' if he pursued the proposition. In fact, Mr. Sears, who lost the municipal election in November of 2007 by eleven votes, later reflected that many former supporters of his earlier candidacies turned against him because of the Potter Farm Proposition.

Sensing the lack of public support amidst vociferous opposition, the plan was ultimately withdrawn by the BOS before calling a Town meeting. Months later, First Selectmen Sears, at a forum for Town of Sharon citizens regarding the idea of combining conservation of open space, farmland and forest along with providing affordable housing, said he believed the Potter Farm Proposition had 'too many moving parts'...meaning it was a complex proposal that 'had something in it for everyone to hate.' It was apparent that Washington was not ready to spend public money in a public-private partnership to meet several of the Town's values identified in the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. NIMBY opposition killed the deal, aided by a public not ready to believe that 'affordable housing' can be related to 'open space' preservation in healthy ways that honors a town's 'rural character.'

HOME OWNERSHIP AT MARBLEDALE MEADOWS—2009 - 2010: The Myfield development initiated by Washington residents Joseph Gitterman & Winston Fowlkes on Mygatt Road, Marbledale had become stalled. The 13 acre property, developed with 10 acres permanently preserved and a building footprint on three acres, was designed for 12 homes using the high-density formula made possible through the State of Connecticut Affordable Housing Act—CGS Section 8-30 (g). The goal was to create a 'set aside' development that allowed a for-profit corporation to develop high-density projects, overriding local zoning laws if 30% of the homes are sold to purchasers, 15% of whom who are at or below 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and 15% at or below 80% of the AMI. (2009 AMI=\$86,700; 80%=\$69,360) Gitterman and Fowlkes had installed subsurface septic systems, water, electricity, a road and driveways and installed two, two bedroom homes of factory built construction with garages. They were caught in the jaws of the national economic recession

and were unable to sell the units. They ended up renting these first houses, one of which had to be sold to an owner at the 60% of AMI level.

Seeing an opportunity to develop affordable home ownership, WCHT secured an option to purchase the property, excluding the two completed houses, for \$600,000. The trust committed \$25,000 of its own funds and received a \$10,000 grant from the Local Initiative Support Coalition (LISC) for pre-development costs that included expenses for filing a \$1+ million grant from the CT Department of Economic and Community Development.

The Trust designed a community of seven single-family and four condominium, limited equity homes to be known as Marbledale Meadows. Homes would be offered to owners whose families whose incomes were at or below 80% of AMI. The engineers and architect agreed to work on contingency, hoping that the State would approve the application for major funding. WCHT reached out to neighbors in preparation for a public information meeting held by the Selectmen in December. The Trust was looking for a show of public support both to obtain the Department of Economic and Community Development housing grant and to have the Town grant more than \$100,000 from its Housing Fund.

In retrospect, the Trustees might have taken as 'fair warning' the fact that the leadership of the Town was not supportive of the project. Following a meeting of the Housing Commission that rejected the Trust's request for money from the Housing Fund, President Sears vented his frustration in a memo to the Trustees:

I'm rather stunned by the Housing Commission's rejection tonight of the WCHT's request for money from the Town's Housing Fund. We need predevelopment funds to prepare an application to DECD for 11 new, owner occupied homes at Marbledale Meadows on Mygatt Road. The Commission's praise in support of WCHT's ability to complete this project seemed drowned by a sea of distrust of the State and a fear that it would not, in the end, fund this excellent proposal. Is it too much to ask the people of Washington to share the risk, along with the hundreds of hours of volunteer time and \$25,000 of WCHT money, to make these homes a reality? I don't think so. Nothing good is ever accomplished without risk. WCHT desired to bring the case for these affordable homes to a Town meeting to let the people decide. The Housing Commission has denied us this right of the people to decide. I would like to think that this action is not indicative of public antipathy toward providing affordable homes for persons of modest means who live, work or volunteer here. WCHT appreciates the many expressions of support and will continue its relentless pursuit of providing a diversity of housing options for Washington.

WCHT naively believed there was public support for the proposal. However, a Town meeting in January 2010, in a 139 to 81 vote, turned down the Trust's request for \$110,000 from the Town's \$300,000 Housing Fund. Quoted in a Republican-American article entitled, "Affordable Housing Plan Nixed in Washington", President Sears said, "No one should see last night's vote as the will of the people of Washington. It's clear that the neighboring interests ruled the day." (Referring to what he and other trustees perceived as an aggressive and successful lobbying effort to defeat the proposal by residents and friends of the adjoining Quarry Ridge Condominium community.) The article continued: "Peter Tagley,

a resident of Quarry Ridge, voted against the proposal, arguing that that the development would be unsightly and a potential economic burden on the town..." Resident Alan Grunberg opposed the project because he claimed that if the housing trust takes state money as it plans, the town has no ability to limit buyers to current town residents or those who work in town. "They're asking the town to subsidize anybody to come in," Grunberg said. "A couple from Bridgeport with special-needs kids who want to move to the country, and we'll end up taking care of them." Sears said, "The housing issue begs the question for every citizen: What kind of town do I want Washington to be? Shall I let it become an aging, upper income lifestyle enclave or a diverse community?" Following the meeting, several trustees felt Mr. Grunberg's comment to 'subsidize anybody to come in' was a not-so-veiled statement of racism and classism from the mouth of a relative newcomer to Washington.

An article in the Voices newspaper entitled, "Town Meeting Defeats WCHT Funding Request", stated: "When the floor opened for comments, it became clear early on that the tone of the room was against the project and against the funding. One notable statistic cited was that since May 2009, four homes have been listed for sale in Washington for less than \$400,000 and 87 homes with an average list price of \$1,675,439. Only six homes have sold for less than \$200,000 in the last four years."

Without an expression of Town support, an ingredient absolutely critical to attracting a state grant, and with the outright denial of a town grant of \$110,00, the WCHT was unable to move forward with its home-ownership program at Marbledale Meadows. Despite the Trust leadership's pledge to complete the project, without public funding the option with its owners expired and the project ultimately failed.

PARCEL PROGRAM—LIMITED EQUITY HOME OWNERSHIP: At Marbledale Meadows and on scattered sites across town, WCHT wanted to make it possible for moderate-income families to afford to own a home. It developed the concepts of a Parcel Program, which is a home ownership program for Washington residents of moderate income. Housing costs to homeowners under this program are lower because they do not include the purchase price of the land. The land is owned by the WCHT with whom the landowner enters a 99-year renewable "ground lease." The Parcel Program is dependent on donations of land and financial contributions to the WCHT to help cover the land costs. Applicants must meet the income limits set by the Trust, either 100% or 80% of the AMI. The leasehold agreement requires the purchaser to pay a small lease fee. The house will rise in value over time, but in a limited way: The homeowner receives a 'limited equity' build-up, where one's original investment increases by the consumer price index each year. When he/she sells, they can reap the gain. WCHT then requires that the next purchaser meet income qualifications, thereby keeping the house affordable in perpetuity.

HOUSING PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAM 1992 - 2005

WCHT launched a highly successful program of making available bringing nearly half a million dollars of federal money to Washington to assist homeowners make their homes safer, more energy efficient and code compliant.

In 1992 WCHT President John Boyer became began pursuing Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA) Housing Preservation Grants. That year WCHT applied for and received a grant of \$100,000 for single-family homeowners in the New Preston section of Washington for needed repairs relating to health, safety, environmental or code compliance, energy conservation and more.

In September the Trust advertised: "Home Improvement Grants Available: Home improvements for single-family homeowners by the U. S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Services. This Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) Program provides money for needed repairs relating to health, safety, environmental or code compliance, energy conservation and more. Applications are received on a first-come, first-served basis. Projects ma include a variety of improvements with an emphasis on thermal standards and insulation, roofs, gutters, porches, wells, septic systems, sanitary or handicap facilities, heating, plumbing, electrical or utility repairs may be considered. Applications are confidential. "

Slowly the idea caught on as applicants who needed roof replacements, wiring, walls, ceilings repaired, deck and window replacements began signing on and receiving their loans at no cost to them. A lien was placed on the property deed for the cost of repairs. After a period of time, if the recipients remained in their homes, the loans were converted into grants. If the owner sold or had to move from their home, they had to repay the loan.

The program was so successful that in March 1994 WCHT applied for an additional \$60,000. An administrator's report to the Trustees states that: "We are the only Town in the State of Connecticut that applied for these funds, and we are the only Agency in Connecticut that has been able to make this program work in the past two years." Phase I, the first \$100,000, was distributed by November 1994.

Phase II, the next \$60,000, was expanded to include all income eligible residents of Washington. Funding was approved by February 1995, and the WCHT Board voted to approve an application for a Phase III program of \$85,000. Rev. David Simpson of the New Preston Congregational Church served as program administrator. In 1996 Simpson turned the job over to Sheila Silvernail, his assistant. She later reported to the Trustees: "Monies for a Phase IV program has been offered to the Town. The Trustees voted unanimously to apply for available monies. The Farmer's Home Project has been a financial and community success. Approximately \$240,000 has been distributed to thirty families in our town."

Over the next several years, more money was sought and received by the Trust for this home improvement program. In 2000, Administrator Sheila Silvernail, said that the Homeowners Improvement Program will be discontinued the following year.

WCHT President Jack Boyer's recollected years later: "We took \$450,000 federal dollars and invested them in the community, Sheila Silvernail was very good at administrating the program. We did about 30 homes. It was a very good program. People didn't want anyone to know they needed help, and we kept them absolutely confidential. I also remember a time when an attorney calling me because a homeowner that had taken a FmHA grant wanted to refinance his mortgage. He asked me to subordinate the federal lien on the house. The terms of the grants were that they had to be paid in full upon sale or re-financing of the home. The attorney screamed at me when I explained that the terms of the federal program would not allow that. There was no way in hell we were going to subordinate the loan and he screamed louder and louder. And he kept screaming and I just hung up. I loved doing that because it was a federal grant. You can't subordinate it. It's a high lien. You can pay it off. I enjoyed that more than anything I'd done in years. Money that came back to WCHT from these payments were used again to help other families...kind of a revolving loan or grant fund."

By 2002, Sheila Silvernail reported, "the Seventh Program ends May 31, 2002. WCHT has administrated the HPG program for ten years, assisting 50 families with 72 grants for a total of \$476,539 in grants and loans. The first program began Sept 1, 1992. Since Washington was only one of two towns in Connecticut taking advantage of this program, we can consider this a highly successful accomplishment. It has been an honor and privilege to be a part of such an effort. I've grown both as a person and in a professional manner due to my association with WCHT and offer all involved many heartfelt thanks."

Silvernail completed her work and put the records in order by September 2002 so the Housing Trust could take control of the project. Marilyn Mitchell was hired as Administrator, and in 2004 Susan Jahnke served for a time as projects coordinator.

In 2005 Ceia Webb, ran the program for a time, then asked that remaining funds in the Housing Preservation program be forwarded to Rebuilding Together to repair dwellings of eligible Washington homeowners. She believes "the spirit of the USDA Rural Development 1999 Housing Preservation grant would be better served by awarding the remaining funds to Rebuilding Together." The Trustees agreed. The remaining funds of the nearly half a million dollars that were captured by WCHT for Washington went into making people's homes more comfortable, safe, energy efficient and affordable.

WASHINGTON COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST TIMELINE 1986 - 2012

1986

- April: Clergy of town organized a forum at Salem Church: *Our Town, What's Up?*

1987

- February: Housing Discussion at First Congregational Church, 11 people attended.
- April: Technical Assistance Meeting – Chuck Collins, ICE, Salem Covenant Church
- June: 2nd meeting for organizing a community land trust, St. Andrew's Church
- October: Public meeting at Town Hall, Certificate of Incorporation announced

1988

- January: WCHT sent Town Housing Survey
- Non-profit certificate approval, IRS Determination letter granted
- Looking at properties: swap of Steep Rock property off Route 109 with Town, Pine Lane Manor on Route 202, New Preston Community House, Quarry Ridge Condominiums, Swiss Hospitality Institute (Wykeham Rise School) property
- December: Zoning Regulations changed to include affordable housing by special permit

1989

- November: Beginnings of Dodge Farm Apartments--the board considers a parcel of land that may be an excellent site for 12-16 apartment/condominiums.

1990

- April: WCHT requests that Town allows New Preston Women's club to convert 2nd floor to two apartments
- Quarry Ridge Condominiums: J. Boyer proceeded with an application for state money to purchase/build limited equity homes. State reacted negatively due to the price per unit. QR not possible at this time and has been dropped.
- WCHT commenced negotiations with owners of Dodge Farm property for 14 apartments and \$1.6M project
- December: Department of Housing preliminary approval of \$1,460,580 for Dodge Farm

1991

- December: Zoning Commission gives final approval for Dodge Farm apartments.

1992

- John Boyer, President, began pursuing Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA) grants for home and energy improvements to low-income residents
- New Preston Women's Club terminated the discussions about creating apartments
- September: FmHA program started—\$100,000 for rehab, repairs, energy conservation

- Pine Lane Manor: WCHT considers if this might be a candidate for purchase. A letter was sent to churches to see if they had any interest in discussing the purchase, but nothing came of this initiative.
- Steep Rock offered an old colonial house on Christian Street, New Preston to the Trust. The idea was abandoned after the Trust found it would take \$90,000 to fix it up and move it.
- December: Residents voted at a town meeting to allocate \$45,000 from the town's non-recurring capital expenditures fund for preconstruction costs for the Dodge Farm project.

1993

- January: Northeast Bancorp owns Quarry Ridge Condominiums and is interested in selling the project to the Town. WCHT voted to file an application for funding with the State.
- Senior housing survey developed and circulated with help of the senior center and churches.

1994

- May: Groundbreaking for Dodge Farm
- March: WCHT applied for additional \$60,000 for FmHA: "Washington is the **only Town** in the State of Connecticut that applied for these funds, and WCHT is the **only Agency** in Connecticut that has been able to make this program work in the past two years."

1995

- March: Certificate of Occupancy granted for Dodge Farm
- FmHA Home Improvement program—Board voted to approve a \$85,000 program application for a third phase.
- Because the Town of Washington formed a 'housing partnership' committee and supported the efforts of WCHT to build Dodge Farms apt, under the terms of the CT Housing Partnership Program, the DECD sent a town aid grant of \$24,865 in May of 1996.

1996

- April: With Dodge Farm up and running, the Trustees began considering a 'scattered site' home ownership program, as it's next project. Linda Spak, Trustee, brought a report to the board from the Litchfield Housing Trust about their program. The group began to focus on younger home-buyers and senior citizens.
- November, the Trust held an open meeting on "Financing a Home," especially for first-time homebuyers.
- The Board appealed to the First Selectman, Alan Chapin, about "The need for more affordable housing and the use of town sites/buildings for such housing."

1998

- WCHT inquired of Region 12 schools to see if board would consider ¾ acre next to Washington Primary School for 6-8 Senior Apartments.

- Senior Center conducted a Senior Housing Survey, sent to all residents: 64 returned 50 interested in senior housing, 9 no, 4 n/a; 32 of 64 are interested in senior housing 'as soon as possible' or within 1-3 years. 37 of 64 have incomes of \$30,000 or less.

2000

- August: The FmHA program will be discontinued next year.
- The Zoning Commission is considering changing Accessory Apartments regulations to be more restrictive. The Trustees vote to "speak favorably for non-restrictions of the accessory apartment regulations."

2001

- The Selectmen's Ad Hoc Housing Study Committee developed a Housing Needs Survey.

2002

- January Ad Hoc Housing Study report showed: "housing prices are rising rapidly, units are getting larger but for fewer people, younger adults are leaving, older adults are moving in, less expensive housing is declining significantly, many people who were born here or who work here cannot afford to live here, Washington fails to meet State requirements for affordable housing, and risks becoming a "gated community" thru its housing prices, continuation of recent trends may produce a community of very wealth, older people, in expensive large houses, with little diversity in race, income or age, and depending on workers from out of town."

2003

- WCHT considered converting the Swiss Hospitality Institute property on Wykeham Road into affordable housing, but decided the cost of acquiring and developing the property made the concept unfeasible.

2005

- Town of Washington by Ordinance, established a Housing Commission "to promote and encourage the development and continued availability of afford housing for the people of Washington by bringing together pubic and private resources, developing recommendations for comprehensive housing policies and goals, and facilitating the accomplishment of those goals." This public structure was put in place to address the concerns raised by a 2002 Housing Study report (recommending the development of 96 units of affordable housing over ten years) that was taken up by a 2005 Housing Diversity Committee.
- WCHT investigated purchasing Ellsworth Apartments from First Congregational Church but found many maintenance issues and decided not to try and raise the \$100,000 asking price for 7 apartments.
- WCHT was planning to petition the town to approve tax abatements for 16 Church Street apartments, but did not follow through.

- The Washington Board of Selectmen appointed a Housing Diversity Committee that recommended a Housing Commission be established. May 19, 2005, the Town of Washington created a Housing Commission to assist in furthering the town's goal of increasing the affordable housing stock. Both the 2005 and 2006 Town Budgets include funds to support the development of affordable housing, so to create clear lines of communication and accountability the Housing Commission was formed.
- 10th anniversary of Dodge Farms. The complex is in need of major repairs and deferred maintenance. WCHT cooperated with Town to apply for a Small Cities Grant.

2006

- A \$440,000 grant Small Cities grant was awarded by the U. S. Housing and Urban Development Department for Dodge Farm repairs and improvement.
- WCHT agreed to act as the 'designated affordable housing administrator' for the Myfield development on Mygatt Road where 4 limited equity condominium units were proposed along with a number of market rate units in this 'set-aside' project under the state 80-30g affordable housing laws.
- Potter Farm Proposal: WCHT began working with the Town of Washington on a complex conservation/development proposal to provide affordable housing lots, conserved open forest and open space and several market-rate building lots on property owned by the Potter family. The plan was withdrawn and never brought to a Town meeting.

2009

- Home ownership at Marbledale Meadows: The Myfield development on Mygatt Road stalled and WCHT obtained an option to purchase the semi-completed development for eleven new owner-occupied limited equity houses and condominiums.
- WCHT asked for support from the town in the form of a \$110,000 appropriation from the town's Housing Fund.

2010

- A January Town meeting turned down the WCHT request for housing funds for the Marbledale Meadows site.
- Trustees hire Accolade Property Management and Connecticut Business Services to manage the Dodge Farms, Riverwoods and 16 Church Street apartments.

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WASHINGTON COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST
1987 - 2012

Trustees

- Dawn Ash
- Rev. Thomas Bennett
- Susan Bishop-Wrabel
- Rev. Douglas Bixby
- John Boyer
- Christopher Charles
- Rev. Robert Ficks
- Joan Gauthey
- Martha Gavenas
- Douglas Greene
- Covington Hardee
- Jean Hough
- Rev. Erik Larsen
- Matthew Murgio
- Martin Meyers
- John Millington
- Philips Payson
- Anne Potter
- Gary Ramos
- Rev. Richard Sears
- Rev. David Simpson
- Janet Smith
- Linda Spak
- Rev. David Sundell
- Diana Tagley
- Amy Tompkins
- Maire Watkins
- Walter Whitney
- Craig Wilber

Incorporators — 1987

- John Boyer
- Rev. John DeZinno
- Covington Hardee
- Rev. Erik Larsen
- Rev. Richard Sears
- Rev. David Simpson
- Rev. David Sundell

Presidents

- John Boyer
- Richard Sears
- Matthew Murgio
- R. William Fairbairn
- Martha Gavenas
- Walter Whitney

APPENDIX A: NEW PRESTON WATER ISSUE 2002-2004

Supplying drinking water to the Church Street development became an entangled conversation between WCHT, the New Preston Water Company (NPWC), its operator RJ Black Co., the Town of Washington Zoning Commission and residents of Hinckley Road and Church Street. Animosity toward the development from neighbors fueled the debate as to whether the existing water system was capable of providing the needed water and, if not, who must pay to make improvements in the system.

Earliest discussions between Peter Talbot, architect, and the operator of the New Preston Water Company, Ron Black of RJ Black Company, affirmed that, though the system was old and the water pressure in the neighborhood marginal, there was enough supply (volume) and flow (pressure) to ensure water for the proposed apartment complex. The source of NPWC water is a well on the New Preston hillside behind the Athas' property on land owned by the Averill family. A well pumped water into an old concrete cistern that gravity feeds the main line down Church Street to Hinckley Road and down New Preston Hill Road to the commercial center of New Preston village.

Ron Black, from a letter to WCHT dated April 24, 2002 says: "NPWC supplies 21 services with a potential well production of 14,000 gallons per day (gpd), with an actual production of 7000 gpd, of which 1-2,000 gpd is the Montessori School. The water line down Church Street is one-inch copper pipe that is very undersized for multiple services. Your proposed 24 BR complex should use a design load of 3,600 gpd. Additional storage will be required, I recommend 4-5,000 gallons more." Mr. Black continues: "my conversation with Simone Rourke (president of NPWC) today revealed a problem that I was not previously aware of—that pressure and flow fluctuates and drops considerably at times depending on usage demands and patterns of customers on the street." Black recommended a "pressure and flow analysis of the main and service connections as part of our feasibility study before NPW is able to determine how to provide water to the proposed complex." The pressure and flow analysis was undertaken by Mr. Black.

A WCHT trustee, attending a public meeting to inform the neighbors about the proposed project at the New Preston Congregational Church, went to draw water from the kitchen faucet after the meeting and found merely a trickle from the tap. Many neighbors complained about inadequate water pressure in the system. The flow and pressure fluctuated as use fluctuated, and also because some customers had installed booster pumps in their homes to better supply their needs—with a resulting negative impact on the whole system and their neighbor's water demands. So, there was enough water, but the distribution system of pipes was ancient and undersized.

In an August 21, 2002, letter from Richard Sears, President of WCHT to Simone Rourk and Ronald Gerst, co-chairmen of NPWC, Mr. Sears formally requested water service from NPWC for 12 apartments, 23 BR, design load of 3,525 gallons per day, for the 16 Church Street development. This request was approximately one year in advance of the anticipated start of construction.

In a September 9, 2002 communication from Ronald Black, operator of NPW, what one WCHT Trustee termed "a classic overreach letter", Black states changes and improvements to the NPW system that would most likely be required by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health: 1) greater storage needed—new & larger tank, 2) Greater pressure needed--current pressure barely meets the PHC requirement, 3) Greater flow is needed--the existing water main is undersized. Black continues: "These three conditions and problems will need to be addressed and resolved. My estimate at this time is that minimum of \$100,000 will be required to solved the problems...it is certainly possible that the final costs will be greater, but I do not see them substantially lower."

September 23, 2002 letter from R Black states that "as you can see there is an excess of available supply (>7000 gpd, for the service connection to the school." He continues: "NPWC realizes many of these issues are inherent in the system and need to be addressed regardless of WCHT involvement. However, they could take years and/or decades. As the WCHT wishes to move forward now, instead of later, addressing the issues now will put a large financial burden on the present customer base. It is therefore the feeling of the NPWC that the WCHT finance a substantial portion of any needed improvements to the system."

Mr. Black goes on: "The water issue must be resolved. This resolution can be done as a group and team effort between the NPW and WCHT, with both parties making investment into a plan that will benefit everyone concerned, and will be good for the town center in general, and will help bring the common water supply system into greater and safer area of compliance with the DPH."

Contrary to the wise counsel of Mr. Black, in fact, both parties did not make an investment into the plan. By the end of the reconstruction of the NPWC source and distribution systems, WCHT paid more than \$160,000 to repair and replace a new well, cistern, pumps, water main the length of Church Street and service lines to 21 homes.

The WCHT Trustees wished to work with the NPWC to deliver water to the new development and address the long-term issues. However, nearly six months passed before communication advanced between the parties. Mr. Black had completed an analysis of the current system.

From his February 25, 2003 letter, Mr. Black shared the results of his analysis of the current service to 20+ customers, with these recommended upgrades that would cost approximately \$160,000:

- Install 2nd well
- Install new 10,000 gal steel buried water storage tank
- Retrofit existing concrete storage tank into a booster and well pump control station
- Bring existing wellhead up to code
- Replace distribution system of a new 4" min. diameter water main, 1200 feet to the end of church street, new service connections and curb stops to existing and new services.

Three months passed and WCHT and NPWC had not begun negotiations to address the needed upgrades to the system.

On June 5, 2003: Peter Talbot, AIA, architect for the 16 Church Street project, sent a letter to Simone Rourke, NPWC President, with a formal request for water service (3375 gpd) from NPWC. This was a follow up of request that had never been responded to from August 21, 2002.

It is not surprising that NPWC was unresponsive to WCHT's requests considering that many immediate neighbors on Hinckley Road and Church Street vociferously opposed the development from the beginning. NPWC interpreted Connecticut State law to say that "it is the sole responsibility of any developer, and not the existing water company, to pay for any and all improvements required to bring adequate, safe, and reliable water service to the proposed project." Current NPWC users did not like the prospect of facing a huge price tag for upgrading an ancient, barely working system, a system that most neighbors complained about and that the NPWC had taken no steps prior to this time to address. It became apparent that they assumed WCHT should foot the entire bill for a complete rebuilding of the system.

Numerous conversations took place between WCHT and Ron Black to get the Department of Public Health (the state agency that oversees small water systems) to define explicitly what needed to be done to have NPWC deliver water to 16 Church Street. Mr. Black initially said there was enough water for the apartments (supply) and the volume could be taken care of with a cistern for water storage on the site. After analysis, it seems the entire system needed better flow to meet current and future water needs.

As WCHT began to face the prospect that it might have to pay for all the expensive upgrades, it tried to find out if it could drill its own wells and supply its own water to the eleven apartments. This would mean never having to 'hook up' to the New Preston system, but this solution was not pursued. However, a clock was ticking: The Zoning permit required that before WCHT could begin construction, a letter stating that NPWC would supply water to project must be obtained.

In a July 9, 2003 letter from Peter Talbot to Ronald Black stated: "We need to move forward on insuring 16 Church Street has an approved water system. We started this over a year ago. I am very concerned about the process and how best to assist the NPWC in providing our project with water. The WCHT is willing to pay your fees to develop an appropriate plan to supply water. Since it appears the NPWC doesn't wish to assist financially, we need to approach this in the most economical way possible."

The Town of Washington, at the urging of WCHT, was granted a Connecticut Small Town Economic Assistance (STEAP) grant for road improvements and drainage for the neighborhood. WCHT made an offer to NPWC to replace the one-inch water main with four-inch pipe at the time of the road work, at no cost to NPWC. "This offer," Mr. Talbot points out in his letter, "makes it possible for the NPWC to stay on their old system until they decide to make the investment for each house to connect to the new system in the future."

Ron Black replied to Peter Talbot's request for a price to design a new water system in a July 18, 2003 letter: "Regarding the design of a new system it will cost \$15,000 to \$25,000 to take the plan through DPH hurdles. The time frame is typically 6 weeks, and I could not even be able to get a draft plan to DPH before September."

A July 20, 2003 letter from NPWC states: "The State of CT DPH has done a routine sanitary review of the system...we have verbal indications that the existing water system is presently meeting (albeit marginally) the Public Health Code in most major aspects, and is not required to do any major improvements to the system in the immediate future. The 'pressure and flow' is borderline and current residents have adequate water, (but) additional demands for the proposed WCHT project would put the line and water system under additional strain. To that end, NPWC is willing to serve the 16 Church Street development, but the WCHT would need to make and pay for the following improvements to the system...with costs, totaling \$162,500. As we have discussed, it is the sole responsibility of any Developer, and not the existing water company, to pay for any and all improvements required to bring adequate, safe, and reliable water service to the proposed project. NPWC is pleased to offer water service to WCHT, but will require that the above items be addressed, installed, and paid for by WCHT, prior to providing water service as requested."

Stretched over a barrel, with the zoning clock ticking, on July 22, 2003 WCHT countered these demands with: "WCHT is prepared to pay for the replacement of the water main feeding Church Street with a 4-inch to 8-inch diameter distribution line. As to the other improvements to the system, we ask that you provide us with documentation from the Connecticut Department of Public Health as to the necessity of such improvements occasioned by our hook-up."

Five days later, on July 25th, in a conversation with Ron Black, Dick Sears asked if he could find out "if DPH would approve just the water main for now to get us service." WCHT offered to also pay for Black to create a full plan for the system. WCHT would also help, as customers of NPWC, over the long run to pay for improvements... Mr. Black said he would call DPH.

On July 31, 2003 Richard Sears sent a memo to Peter Talbot, architect: "I spoke with Ron Black who called DPH, they gave the same answer, 'we're too busy to comment on the present condition of the system.' However, Hank Adams of DPH said, 'Well Ron, this is sounding like a certificate system' (which is a much more complex and highly regulated type of system with an approval process that takes up to 18 months.) I proposed that maybe WCHT can say to DPH 'we can't afford \$160,000' and consider, if it's legal, we will set up our own system, drill wells, and supply our own water, and disengage from NPWC because they cannot provide the service. If they say no, we might have to take DPH to court, not a pleasant, nor financially feasible alternative, and drag things out. I said that WCHT might be willing to pay for the recommended new tank in addition to the water main. Black said maybe DPH would not look at this system as a 'certificate system' if we provided both a new tank (\$25,000) as well as the new main (\$55,000). Sears finished by saying, "I think

we are building a good case to go to Hank Martin (Chairman of Washington Zoning Commission) to show we are serious about solving the problem and have a 'plan' (albeit not DPH approved) for upgrades to the system."

An August 2, 2003: letter from Ron Black to Henry Adams, State of CT DPH- Drinking Water Division, has Black asking: "Will DPH require additional storage, a second well or recommend these? What about any other requirements? The Town of Washington has prohibited WCHT from even starting demolition work at the site until a letter from DPH, indicating what is and is not required for tie in, is in hand. As Certified Operator and Representative of NPWC, we are formally requesting such a letter and response to the above concerns."

In October WCHT appealed to the Zoning Commission to allow it to begin construction even though it did not have an approved water system in place. In a public hearing the Zoning Commission voted to allow WCHT to 'break ground.'" Following that vote, an October 10, 2003 Waterbury Republican American newspaper article entitled, 'Water supply source still at issue', says "WCHT broke ground Thursday on a new affordable housing complex on Church Street, but efforts to join the units to a water supply are still water-logged. At issue, how much work is needed—and who will pay for the upgrades. Housing Trust President, Dick Sears, said the nonprofit group has offered to pay \$80,000 toward the installation of a new storage tank and replace a one-inch water main with a 6 to 8 inch main. The water company estimates the upgrades will cost more than \$160,000 including a new back-up pump. The wrangling over the water system is one of many disputes between the housing trust and neighbors opposed to the complex. After seven months of unsuccessful negotiations over the system, the commission voted Wednesday to let the trust start construction. But now it must present a state-approved water plan before receiving a certificate to open the building. Jack Boyer, head of the trust's building committee, assured concerned neighbors that it will install a 10,000 gallon cistern, unconnected to the neighborhood water system, for fire protection." (This was another benefit to the community, a cistern for fire department usage, that WCHT offered.)

At a meeting in late October at the Department of Public Health, WCHT, NPWC, Ron Black met with DPH officials to try and work things out. Mr. Black agreed to revisit the costs of improvements and report back. On December 22, 2003 a site visit took place with WCHT, NPWC and Mr. Black for a walkthrough of the 16 Church Street project and water system. Mr. Black agreed to prepare a letter to WCHT by mid January 2004.

In a January 15, 2004 letter to Simone Rourke Ron Black notified NPWC that he was withdrawing from this project and all associated proceedings in their entirety, and would not proceed any further with any design or construction for either NWPC or WCHT regarding this issue. Conveying this to WCHT, Ms. Rourke said that "costs to do the proposed work from other construction companies will be substantially more than the \$162,500 we had originally proposed." Clearly NPWC was expecting WCHT to pick up the entire tab.

She continues: "As of this date, NPWC is prepared to reimburse WCHT up to \$7000 towards the cost of a new well and up to \$5000 for retrofitting the existing well if required by DPH. It is important to remind WCHT that NPW system continues to be operational condition at this time...it does not need to do any of the proposed improvements to stay in compliance with the DPH....and that all improvements required by the DPH to allow water service to the WCHT project are the responsibility of the developer (the WCHT) including all associated design, engineering and consulting costs."

With the technical advisor to both WCHT and the NPWC withdrawing, with demolition completed and construction on the new apartments begun, and the absolute need to have a letter certifying that NPWC would supply water, WCHT finally agreed to pay for all the recommended improvements to the NPWC drinking water supply and distribution system. Along with advocating for the STEAP grant to provide drainage, complete new road surface and sidewalk improvements to the Church Street neighborhood, a cistern for fire protection of the neighborhood, WCHT ended up providing an entirely new water system to 21 homes and 11 apartments in New Preston.