Low and Moderate Income Housing Development Task Force
Monday, June 29, 2026 - 11:00 am

Ken Hughes - Chairman

Chairman Hughes called this task force to order at 11:00 am with the following in attendance: Clayton Barber, Timothy Follos, Ken Hughes, Tracie McGill, Clayton Menser, Terri Morse (11:10), James O'Bryan, Tim Pierce, Davina Thurston, Carol Calabrese, Matt Stanley, Adam DeSantis, Caitlyn Wargo and Nicole Justice-Green. Alan Jones was absent.

Also present: - Dina Garvey, and Renee Bruno

HUGHES: Good morning, everybody, it's 11:00, we'll call the Housing Task Force to order. Hopefully, everybody has an agenda. Just a couple of things to continue from our last conversation from a couple of months ago. There's two new items that I just wanted to put out there for discussion. I don't think they're going to be long discussions, but it was just on my brain, so I wanted to share it with you. And then in Agenda Item #3; just a continuation from what we were discussing back in April and then just some ongoing topics for consideration. Ongoing efforts and then some in the news and so legal. So, it shouldn't take a ton of time to have these conversations today but wanted to make sure we came together.
So, for Agenda Item #2; the conversation has been brought up to me about what is going to be done at the State level and/or at the County level as it pertains to property assessments for those properties that are either in a land trust or have been identified and owned by a land bank. Conversations that basically have stated that it might not be fair to assess these properties the way that you would assess a regular private home or a regular private property, like these properties are "special" because they are attempting to solve the housing crisis in a unique way. And so, I wanted to bring this up for discussion. Megan Murphy has done a little bit of research on this, and I asked her to speak a little bit about this topic. I think they are having some ongoing conversations at the county level about this, but I don't think we've discussed here at the Task Force level and Matt Stanley is raising his hand.

STANLEY: So, Hannah from Real Property and Bill have been working on something.

HUGHES: Okay

STANLEY: Bill is not here today, so he actually asked that we not bring it up today.

HUGHES: Not to bring it up?

STANLEY: Well, not to bring up what we're trying to work on from the county level.

HUGHES: Oh, okay

STANLEY: Because he has a lot of information to share, that is, I only stayed at a Holiday Inn Express last night, so I am only that smart (laughter). But there's something to do with the State 482 Real Property law and some other things going on that he would like to share with the

Supervisors, I think, before we really move forward so we can understand it, because it's pretty deep, because each one of these types of properties is different from the rest.

HUGHES: Right

STANLEY: Like the Land Bank is titled, there are deed restrictions, whereas, the Housing Trust Properties, the land is actually owned by the Housing Trust. So, there are different ways to hand the different situations, so we want to make sure that we have all our t's crossed and I's dotted before we really bring someone out that is, from the County level. So, I don't want to step on Megan's toes, but from the County level, that's sort of where we are with that.

HUGHES: And before we jump into Megan, I appreciate that every much. I don't want to get ahead of our skis on any of this, but I felt like this was a new topic for consideration and conversation and education.

STANLEY: Yup

HUGHES: So, I thought that we could just take a few moments to hear from Megan about what she's aware of and then it sounds like this Board of Supervisors will be having a conversation in the near future, either publicly or in executive session, I am not sure which to kind of get a deeper education and peel back the layers of that onion.

STANLEY: And to be honest, it all started with a conversation that Megan had in a couple of towns.

HUGHES: Great

STANLEY: So, it's definitely a good conversation to start having and starting to realize and know how this affects the assessment values of these properties.

HUGHES: Fabulous, thank you

MURPHY: Thanks, everybody. So, yeah, I completely agree, I've learned more about property tax assessment and other things that are pretty complicated and I agree, there's not, there's a lot to learn and there's a lot to think about and so from an educative standpoint, I guess I'll just talk to it from the Housing Trust standpoint, because that's the standpoint I know and I agree, also, that it's two different legal mechanisms that create a restriction on these properties. Whether that's a deed restriction, which is different than what we have at the Housing Trust, which is a ground lease and so, just as Mr. Stanley talked about and I won't get into the ground lease, because it's quite a complicated process, but the reason, what is important about that is with the Housing Trust, we have a ground lease with the homeowner. So, when we go into a transaction and like for example use the homes in Keene, Adirondack Roots built the homes in Keene and then transferred the house and the land to the Housing Trust for a certain consideration and then the Housing Trust only transferred, what we call the improvement, which is the home to the homeowner and the Adirondack Community Housing Trust continues to retain title to the property underneath and in that ground lease there is something that is called a resale formula that our

homeowners have agreed to and this is what we're getting at from the reason why tax assessment is meaningful and that's so that we have a 99 year ground lease and that individual in the home cannot move through a real estate transaction to sell that home without the Housing Trust being part of it and that's how we ensure compliance with all the issues going on in the ground lease, which is very long and very legal. And so in that part of it is what as I was saying is a resale formula and so when that house is originally transferred, say up in Keene, we have an appraiser come out and appraise the home for it's actual resale value and then when those people go to sell that home, we have another appraisal done and we look at those two numbers and that homeowner only receives 25% of that increase in value, plus the amount that they paid for the house. That's how we keep the resale of the home affordable for the next person. So, that person never realizes all the equity that's built up in that home. So, for example, we have homes that have been held since 2014, and if we looked at, they were purchased for $70,000 at that time or so and you look, they've had a great increase in value. We just had a sale, two years ago, here in Elizabethtown and you know that house was $60,000-$70,000, it had increased in value by about $150,000 in that appraisal and so that person received it and then we moved on to transfer that home, again, for about $126,000. So, someone here in Elizabethtown purchased a home, a lovely home for about $126,000. We just sold a 3-bedroom, 2-bath home in April in Lake Placid, that was a 2-year old home and that one sold for $226,000. So, we keep that resale value low, but that home in Lake Placid appraised for $440,000. So, that's a big difference and so when you're looking at taxation of that home, if that home were taxed at $440,000, instead of being taxed at $226,000, you're talking about literally over, it's like $1,200 more a year in taxes, $1,500 more a year in taxes. So, we're trying to sell homes to folks that can afford $226,000, well then, they can't also, taxing them at that high rate of $440,000, really stresses their budget, it's too much and so legally, New York State has not addressed, I've looked at, well, they have, actually, that's incorrect to say that there was a law initiated last year. There's a couple of solutions to this, there's other housing trusts, 25 housing trusts in New York State. This isn't our issue alone and so in the past we've worked with individual assessors and talked with them about this and have worked on that, but there is also the idea that you can work on this from a county level, New York State has actually passed a law that I did have a conversation with Hanna Carson, last week and I have spoken to Bill Tansey and so there are some potential options. Some things also have pluses and minuses to them, so that would be something that the Board of Supervisors would want to look at, figure out what makes the most sense if you want to address this on a county level and that's a question, not every county does. There are some counties that have and that is it.

And so, I did also bring up that this concerns more towns in the county than I think folks understand. We have Housing Trust homes in 11 towns in Essex County and so this is something that does concern a lot of your communities and so I have spoken with some supervisors, some tax assessors and not all of them, I have only been in this position for 6 months or something like that and so this is something that I think is near and dear to our heart, because we want our homeowners to feel like housing isn't a financial stressor to them based on their taxes.

So, we would be interested in being a part of the conversation about this and talking it through and helping to educate folks more about this ground lease process and what is, you know, what we see as important. We have all started working on these different solutions for helping folks that live and work here in homes that they can afford and so you know having to keep working on that and create a solution that works for as many people as possible.

STANLEY: I believe, in this task force, especially, we need to be very careful about the language we use. The assessor cares about one thing, cares about the fair market value of your house and to give you the exemptions that you're entitled to and that you apply for to be entitled to. We need to keep in mind that tax and assessor does not go in the same, it's not tax assessor, it's an assessor of a property, define the fair market value of that property. Taxes are done once the assessed value of the town is created and then they're divided up, because we'll have people come into our office and say I need to talk to the tax assessor to pay my tax bill. Well, for that you have to go to the tax collector. If you have a problem with your assessed value, you need to talk to the assessor. So, we as Supervisors get really lazy about that at times, talking about tax assessment. We need to make sure we're making sure they're separate issues when we're talking about the problem. Because there are things that need to do be done for some of these properties, especially if the land is held by a not-for-profit. So, there are definitely a lot of things that go into it, but I just want to make sure that we're very careful about the way we talk about assessment and how they're handled and dealt with and how they affect, in the long run, the tax rate and our taxes.

HUGHES: And to piggyback on that, I want to make sure that we are also understanding that assessors carry certain legal responsibilities that are outside the jurisdiction of a town supervisor, town board, maybe a county board, definitely, probably. So, I want to understand and that is why I want to bring this conversation up and certainly we're going to learn more from the legal side of things, because I want to know what we can do and what we can advocate for and what we absolutely can't do and is not in our lane. I know that the assessors work off of their rules and they're doing their job based on their interruption of those rules which are derived by New York State. So, but, at the same time, Essex County has created a mechanism, the Essex County Land Bank, to help keep housing affordable in this County and we also have the Adirondack Community Housing Trust which has been doing work to also keep housing affordable. So, we have these two mechanisms that are working to help make housing affordable, but then there's headwind of assessment. So, I think this is a natural progression into, we want to get people in these homes, we work hard to make that happen, but we don't want to burden them on assessment and then potentially on taxes, again, two different things. So, I am glad that you brought that up, because they are very different entities. But, that is why I am not afraid to have this conversation here, because I want to make sure that that education exists and I have no problem pushing the envelope to figure out what needs to happen and what should happen and when it comes to land banks, I don't know how many housing trusts there are in New York State, but when it comes to land banks there is at least 30 land banks that are doing the work, similar to what Essex County doing. So, this is a statewide conversation, and I don't know if our friends in the southern tier or our friends in Ogdensburg or other places in New York State have already solved this problem or if we can potentially be the leader on providing recommendations back to New York State on how to solve this problem. So, that's why I don't mind bringing it up here, because potentially could be the tip of the spear to solve this headwind.

WOOD: I totally support housing for everybody who would possibly want it. What I am looking into is something a little more philosophical when I talk about this in my town, and it's very negative, but these people are receiving all the same services, why are they paying for it. So, if we could have all of our discussions have a little bit of that hook into it, too, it would be a lot easier for the rest of us to go back and talk about this in public forums. Because it is true, they are receiving all

the same things. You know you can keep moving the tax issue around and around and around, but the basis is, everybody wants everything they can get, and you want to pay as little possible. But I wanted to keep that point in the conversation.

HUGHES: Duly noted

WOOD: There is a philosophy about this, too that we need to maybe try and get a grip on.

THURSTON: I hear what you're saying, Meg and I am going to talk about the other side of that coin and that is the simple fact that the house isn't, in your example, a $449,000 house, but it can only sold for $239,000, so in my mind, I understand why that assessed value would be less, because it's literally not worth it. They literally cannot sell it for $449,000, playing devil's advocate. Why should they be taxed at $449,000, if they can only sell it for $239,000 regardless of what it looks like or what the assessed value is?

WOOD: I get it, but all along they're having breaks on purchase price and all of that that other people aren't getting. Again, it's twisted.

THURSTON: As Donna Bramer would say, it's a sticky wicket.

JUSTICE-GREEN: I just want to clarify something a little bit since we discussed this with the formation of the Land Bank. The Land Bank is reducing their mortgage or their purchase price; we're not going for tax abatement. When they go through housing counseling, they are told that their home is going to be assessed at its current pre-market value even though we are selling the home for less than that. The goal was for the tax roll and tax income to be restored after this property has been vacant for a number of years. So, well certainly banks may have a different mission, they work more closely to get tax abatement or different assessment, that is not something that we programmatically pursued, because when they go through their housing counseling, they should be fully made aware of the full value of the taxes and them being escrowed, and what their true mortgage payment is and if they can't afford that then that's just not the home for them and so I just wanted to clarify that I see both, but for us it's different and that's not something we've been pursuing, because we were told when we formed the land bank that that was the goal. So, that's where our assistance comes in.

MURPHY: Is there a limit on their income for folks purchasing? I am sorry that I don't know this. Because at the Housing Trust, by IRS rules, we can't sell a housing trust home to anyone over 120% AMI. So, I just didn't know if the Land Bank had a limit.

MURPHY: Yeah, just like with any grant, it depends on the grant funding, but LBI funding, which we used to fund all these homes, as well as ARPA, there was no income limit. We programmatically had set it at 200% AMI or below and that is written within our acquisition and disposition policy, which is what LBI asked us to follow. There are other grants that we have looked at where the AMI is different and that's all taken into consideration with whomever they go into counseling with. So, they qualify them and they look at if they are mortgage ready for that home that they are looking at. So, they're both valuable tools, there's just different tools.

MURPHY: Thank you for that.

STANLEY: We to also understand as legislators in understanding that when we create or pass laws for exemptions, all you're doing is taking some money off of this person's home and making everybody else pay it. So, there's that fine line that has to be walked, too. I think part of the Land Bank's job, part of your job, is to get these properties back on the tax roll, which helps lessen the burden. So, a house that is blighted, that doesn't have the taxes paid, when we go to sell that in tax foreclosure all those taxes are usually, at that point and time, everybody has just got to write that cost off. Now that you get it back on the tax roll and you're starting to get money back into it, hopefully that majority of these properties that you're getting back on the tax roll, back being active, just by themselves are going to lower everybody else's tax rate, as it is. So, I think we also need to keep in mind, get things to give incentives off the monthly payment, because it's a cheaper home to buy, so I mean just for me, I built my own my house in the Town of Jay for $100,000, my house is now assessed for $440,000, so I pay taxes on that. So, my $1,400 a month mortgage payment, only $400 of that goes to my principal and interest. So, let that sink in.

HUGHES: Any other comments on this topic? Just wanted to make sure it was on our brains, just wanted to keep it out there, if you have any bright ideas or anything that comes up, let me. I would certainly like to keep this conversation going to see where it lands, where it leads and what we will do as either a task force or as a Board of Supervisors to kind just keep that conversation going and moving it forward.
Okay, letter b; Statewide Rural Blight Fund - resolution in support and lobby for; the last time we met, a little note that was passed to me with this idea and so I wanted to just bring it up for, again some more explanation, potentially, some more conversation, Mike, I don't know if you would like to dive into this a little bit?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, based on, this is something that we've been working on a long time. The State, at different times, has come up with different funding mechanisms and they typically don't meet rural needs. They have been kind of handed off and formula based type situations to cities like Troy, who has the same needs as us, but because our population doesn't meet the criteria, we're typically overlooked on those types of things. I think blight is an issue in rural America that is too big for any one community to address totally. We have these conversations far too often. If towns deal with it directly, it ends up of the tax warrant, the County ends up paying the tax warrant, which are the same taxpayers that are handling that to begin with and when we resell at auction, we typically don't get what the tax warrant paid was and we continue to do this and those things are typically overlooked. We've come up with some innovated ideas, locally, we've had some cost share models that we've employed, but it's simply not enough. I think we have a report now that's very good that Lake George/Lake Champlain provided us. I think it's a really good tool to try and do that lobbying now in terms of getting some action locally on some of these items that have been outstanding for a really long time. So, I do and I think being in the Park is a little different, you'll hear me say this an awful lot, whether it is about garbage or anything, I think the Park is the responsibility of all New Yorkers. I absolutely feel that way when the Park was created that was common of the theme from our State Officials and I think we got to hold them to task on that and I think this is another one of those items if we want to keep 4 million people coming year to year. We need the mechanism, and tools and not just rely on the 36,000 people to pay for that action, but all of New York State. So, I do think the timing is good, I think being that we have that report,

I would rather not see that sit on a shelf, I would rather see that report be able to use for some action items. So, that's kind of my stump speech on that topic.

HUGHES: What do you think would be an appropriate next step, just in terms of creating that resolution of support in educating the Board of Supervisors or us, how do you want to proceed?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I would be happy to take a stab at a draft and get it to the whole group where we can just kind of use our collective intelligence to add, to take away.

HUGHES: Okay

MASCARENAS: Those types of things, I think it's a good time.

BARBER: So, you're talking about the blighted properties?

MASCARENAS: Yeah

BARBER: Bill shared the law that he drew up for the Town of Chesterfield and I will send that to everybody or have Bill send a copy to everybody. He had actually drawn up a law, I am sorry that I didn't bring a copy of that, but I did introduce it. He drew it up for my last meeting and did give it to my board for review. My Planning Board and ZBA Board both have looked at it. I have had a lot of different, some for it, some a little bit against it, some think the law is just a little too picking because there are some statements in there, so it goes on a point system and it would be much better if it was in front of you, it would be much easier to explain, but there are some picky things. You can actually put points against somebody for having dead trees in their lawn, branches and stuff like that. But, if you have a property with a lot of garbage on it, extra campers, unlicensed vehicles, and I know we have all the other laws, but my whole point is this will go on your taxes.

MASCARENAS: Which we pay.

BARBER: So, I am having a public hearing, July 14.

HUGHES: This is a blighted property law?

BARBER: Yeah

HUGHES: Specifically for blighted property?

BARBER: For blighted property that he wrote up for the Town of Chesterfield, it is in their name. I am more than happy to be, let's say Guinea pig of the law.

MASCARENAS: Yes

BARBER: But I am having a public hearing on July 14, I am not saying that we're going to adopt it right there, but I want to get people's feelings. My Planning Board think it is the best thing and what me to pursue it.

HUGHES: And do you have zoning in your town?

BARBER: I do

HUGHES: Do you have a zoning law?

BARBER: Zoning and we are updating the zoning laws the whole time that we are going through this. I will definitely relay on how this is going to turn out.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Why did Bill structure it so that it went back on the taxes and wasn't just like a straight fine?

BARBER: I think I was the biggest, because I don't want to see it go through the court system, because unfortunately, there's way too many, like I said, if I could collect all the back fines in the Town of Chesterfield, I wouldn't have to charge taxes to everybody, for land taxes for approximately 3 years, if that gives you any idea. And I am more than willing, I said to Bill, as far as, if this go through and works and I know he's planning on introducing it to the whole board at some point, but I am more than happy to give the money, if this works, I don't even want the money, because it goes on our land taxes and obviously you make, Essex County makes good for it. I am more than happy, whatever I get for blighted properties to give back to the County, because they're the ones making good for it, but I want to see this stick, and I think it's going to get people. Just by us, and I have stated this once before, just by us talking about has made people, some people have moved already, because they don't want to see it coming on their taxes.

O'BRYAN: Does the point system bring them into the courts if they accumulate so many points?

BARBER: No, because you have to accumulate up to 100 points and so like I said, having brush on your property is only like 10 points and you have to accumulate up to 100 points for the town to even bring this.

O'BRYAN: So, my question is, what happens if you have a blighted property owner that refuses, you're going to move in and clean it?

BARBER: Not necessarily.

HUGHES: Maybe Clayton, you could share the law.

BARBER: Yeah, and that's what I said. I wish I had brought it.

HUGHES: If you could share it with us and take a peep at it, that would be good. I don't want to get into the details of your law that's still being judicated, right now, for the interest of our collective time.

BARBER: My whole thing is we have a building that we condemned, downtown, right on Front Street and as I said, we served them, we actually served him in person and he lives in California, I think, we actually spent the money to serve him and then this guy turned around and he always goes the full three years and we, the County was lacking taking back his property, foreclosing on his property, he went into bankruptcy and then we were told, can't touch him and so we couldn't touch him for 6-months, 9-months, something like that and then I was told, well, you got to start this procedure all over again.

FOLLOS: I think the reason, to put the penalty on the taxes, there's two reasons; the first is that people tend to ignore fees, especially people who own blighted properties, but if it's on your taxes, you can't ignore it and the other reasons that a lot of our municipal judges tend to be lenient. Again, if it's on your taxes it's not going to be ignored.

BARBER: I didn't want to say that because we have prior judges sitting here (laughter).

FOLLOS: These guys are tough.

BARBER: I have made that statement before.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Well, and I know that one that is actually putting something into practice and I think that's exactly what we've been discussing for years about best practices and bringing it back to the center of community progress, having multiple to combat blight and not just, you know, of the Land Bank is created, yeah, that's wonderful, but there's a division of labor and then also power and authority of like what these non-profits and public authorities can do and what really lays in the hands of the municipality and the vast majority, like the complaints that we get and the reports that we get on properties that we don't own. So, I think that's awesome, truly that that's happening and it will be interesting to see, you know, I think as those move towards adoption and lessons learned and ways it which it is not effective. My question is, for this the Rural Blight Fund, Mike is this a funding mechanism that should be for municipals and counties to subsidize their work in stabilizing these properties and cleaning up these properties or what are you thinking?

MASCARENAS: Well, so it would have to be properties that were owned either by government or non-profits or those types of things. Those private-public partnerships around this topic, you get into a whole different issue when you're thinking about that. I can tell you that we have plenty and that there's a reason why we typically get them at foreclosure. If you were around enough to see foreclosure after foreclosure, you're going to see frequent flyer properties that somebody buys off, sight on unseen, three years later taxes aren't paid and we sell it again. And that happens more times that I can count. I tell you this most recent auction, there's been at least three properties that we have had to deal with the blight issue after taking ownership in November. So, many systems that are in place and many tools are failing in terms of that property didn't get bad, is my point, when I took it in November. There were 30 years of problems, likely connected to these properties. I am getting sited for it now, because I am probably an easier target, but that is what my experience is. So, we have removed one property, we have cleaned up garbage in another one and we had a third one that was presenting a public health issue. So, that's just my involvement in properties that we still own, that we literally just took, didn't sell at the auction. I would like to do assessments of these properties prior to auctions to see where we're at. There

is a lot of different thought processes on that, right? And we have 18 towns with 18 different ways of doing business and thought on that, but if we did that would our own code folks, we would be able to pick these properties out ahead of time and kind of look for the proper candidates, not only for Land Bank like we do, but for demolition and those types of things. So, it's a lot of thought, it's something that we're going to need the entire Board to do. I think the County can be the catalyst, countywide in terms of application and funding. It's probably easier than 18 individual towns attacking the same pot of money. I think we could absolutely do that with our Planning Department and/or our Land Bank and/or Adirondack Roots, there's enough experts in the room to be able to do that work.

HUGHES: Nicole, are you asking that question because you're curious, because you would like to advocate for an RPC to be able to receive this money outside of government?

JUSTICE-GREEN: No, I am asking because I sit on the Government Affairs Board for the Rural Housing Coalition and worked with the Governor's Office on Let Them Build and we're in that phase of starting to brainstorm what we want to advocate for in unmet needs.

HUGHES: Right

JUSTICE-GREEN: And so, it was more of a wondering exactly what you were thinking and searching my brain to see if something like that already exists that maybe we haven't tapped into or is it's truly an unmet need across the State.

HUGHES: Okay

JUSTICE-GREEN: What they tend to ask is, there's plenty of demolition funding out there, and that is for local government, including public authorities and non-profits. It is the issue of site control when you're like in this gray area of, it's now yours, because it didn't sell at auction and you can maybe leverage that funding for it, but prior to auction it's still kind of your responsibility, if it is a public health hazard, so right now we don't have, across the State, any money for subsidizing the stabilizing costs, clean up costs, and they do and are legitimately higher for Essex County than it is for the rest of the State and so it was just more of a, here to help, and very interested and if it is something that the County wants to push for, I am happy to help carry that message.

HUGHES: Because I would advocate for not just governments being able to, if this was ever created, and signed by the Governor and put into law, whatever it was, I would want to see housing, RPCs, housing trusts, land banks, also be able to apply and get some money directly outside of government, you know municipalities and counties could also, but it would be great to, because you guys acquire properties outside of us, often and you guys should have the access to the same pool of money that we do as well , for the collective good. That is just my opinion.
Okay, if there's no more discussion on any of those topics, I just want to move to the unsafe structure law, number three. I made a chart last month of towns that have unsafe structure laws, towns that don't have unsafe structure laws, clearly there's nothing that we can do to force a town to have an unsafe structure law if they don't have one. I just want to put it out there. Is there anything that we, as a task force, think that we can do to support those towns that don't have one.

I know that it's completely up to them if they don't have one to do that in their own town. But I just wanted to, we had that conversation and I just wanted to maybe wrap that up this month or if anybody had any ideas or considerations.

O'BRYAN: Refresh my memory, how many towns are we talking about?

HUGHES: I don't remember., 6,7,8, maybe.

O'BRYAN: That have?

HUGHES: That have, yeah.

MASCARENAS: Most towns have a variety of laws. Unsafe structure is specific, but we have junk laws, we have unsafe structure, we're looking into blight property laws, and these things are all good, these things all have the ability to do things that are beneficial in your community. The biggest issue that I see happening is how are you going to enforce them? Do you have the ability to do the enforcement piece and if you don't then there's no silver bullet that's going to help anyone. So, to me we fall short on the enforcement side or being able to have the physical infrastructure in place. I mean I live in the Town of Moriah; I think we have two very part-time individuals that are doing code. They can't keep up, there's no possible way that they can keep up, and I don't know about all your specifically, but I know that there's not a lot of those individuals, I think that the gentleman that's working in Moriah might be working in five other towns at the same time. So, how do you get to handling these laws in a way that's meaningful and the result becomes real change, without a lot of investment locally, to hire more hours, those types of things, it's 6 one, half dozen the other.

HUGHES: According to my notes, I have 11 towns that have unsafe structure law, 11.

O'BRYAN: We actually put a plan together to address this exact subject, several years ago in Ticonderoga and I can't tell you, digging all through and exactly what you said, Michael, it was all in the enforcement, but the plan was to be able to dissect a town into sections. I think we were going to use voter registration sections to be able to go into one area at a time, figure out where we were in compliance, where we weren't in compliance and reporting compliance to let those property owners know you're out on compliance, here's what we need to have you do and for those that could not achieve what they needed to do, we would help them. We had an organization set up to be able to handle that for almost no dollars at all and it just didn't get carried through. So, something that we're looking at now again. We're actually working on some things right now in Ticonderoga. So, this will be something I want to say close to, it's important.

MASCARENAS: It sounds positive.

HUGHES: Okay, any other discussion on unsafe structure laws for towns? I am going to remove it from the agenda for the future, unless we want to keep it in on.

FOLLOS: I just wanted to ask Clayton to email us the law.

BARBER: Absolutely, I will. I have every intention.

HUGHES: That would be great, thank you, sir.
And then ongoing topics for consideration. This is just to keep it on the brain. These are just things that I have heard about, seen about, thought about. I know letter D came from an individual on this committee. Letter K, on the back, should probably go in this section. That was also an idea that came from an individual on this committee. These are just things that I know that are happening in the County, not necessarily looking to dive into any of those, just keeping people aware of what's happening. Number 6; in the news, this is just a story that I heard about housing being exempt from SEQRA, new housing being exempt from SEQRA, going to that URL seemed very focused on new housing in NYC. I'm not sure how that would play out in the rest of New York State, but just putting things out there when I hear them because I never know when it's going to tap into our brain and we might jump on something that is important for you and you want to bring it up to us for diving in. So, I will move K over to section 4, it should be over there.
So, I have nothing else for the agenda, if there is anybody else that has something to discuss for housing, I think moving forward, in talking about instead of just talking, which is great, but action items, I think is going to be really important for the Board of Supervisors to heard from Hannah and Bill Tansey when it comes to the property assessment, Megan, thanks for kind of elucidating us on the topic. Is it going to be a really important conversation, a lot of layers to the onion. I wish it wasn't as difficult, but it's probably going to be a thing. And the idea of the statewide Rural Blight Fund, thank you Mike for bringing that up. I am happy to work with you, if you're looking to generate some type of language, I am happy to work with you on that. I just would like to see us have something tangible as we go along that we can either share with our representatives at the State level or something that we can do locally, something that we can push out to our towns, something that we can enact at the County, but I would like to see something come out of this task force just to keep action going to address the mission which is at the bottom of the agenda. So, those are my two cents.

MORSE: I just have a question, and I need this committee's support in it. In speaking with my counterparts in Franklin and Clinton Counties, what they shared with me is that, and I'm not sating that Essex County sort of started this tend but what was shared is that there are not enough housing opportunities, and when I say houses, I don't mean like a house, I mean like a place for a person to sleep, for those that are homeless or have recently been evicted and they go to DSS for help and sometimes what happens is the person, there's not enough available dwellings in Essex County, so the person gets sent to Clinton County, because maybe Clinton County has a space, but what I am hearing is that now that Clinton County is getting full and now people are going to Franklin County. So, it's sort of my crystal ball that says that there's going to come a time where there's no place for them to go and you know one of the good and not good things is that we don't have tent communities in Essex County, yet. And so, I am trying to figure out how this committee can help sort of, I am being the canary in the coal mine, how can, what do I need to do to help insure that people have appropriate housing when they get, when their health insurance gets taken away eventually or you know money for housing dries up someday for the people that need low income housing. What do I need to bring to you guys to help put some energy behind this topic?

MASCARENAS: Well, former DSS Commissioner, and I've got Renee here, so I am probably going to put her on the spot a little bit. When I was the DSS Commissioner, in regard to homeless people, tend to use that real lose, realizing that the real definition is around homeless and the rights of individuals and how that all works, I can tell you when I was Commissioner, there were very few.

MORSE: Of street homeless?

MASCARENAS: I want to say like less than a dozen a year we would deal with in even the coldest months. When we were dealing with placement. So, we had a handful of places that we contracted with. Yes, one is probably technically in Clinton County.

BRUNO: Yeah, the Villa.

MASCARENAS: But it is kind of on the border of Clinton County and Essex County and we have that. We have a place locally that we also contract with that we do that work. But we try and properly fit the clientele for the place that we put them, depending on what the issue is. So, if that really is a huge issue, it has become an issue since I left, because it was very minor in terms of what we were dealing with in terms of homelessness.

BRUNO: Yeah, we don't see. I don't remember the last time that we had somebody come in that we had to turn away because we didn't have anywhere to send them. But I understand…

MORSE: I'm not saying you're turning them away, I am saying that they're being sent to Clinton County, because there's available housing in Clinton County or available apartments.

BRUNO: That has always been the case. We've always used the Villa to house people.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Terri, what kind of emergencies? I mean this is not just DSS that is dealing with homelessness necessarily. Are we talking about mental health crisis? People being evicted?

MORSE: A lot of times, Nicole, it's people that may not be street homeless, but maybe they're leaving, maybe they've been couch surfing and they don't want to couch surf anymore. I think they're, like you were saying Mike, there's a lot of different definitions of homeless, and really kind of not talking about street homeless, I am talking about people that don't have a permanent residence.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Like transient.

MORSE: Transient, right and so there's, I believe there's about 24 people on the waiting list for the Mental Health Association, for them to be able to get their own housing. So, people that are eligible for housing, a housing stipend from Mental Health Association, not to be confused with Essex County Mental Health, so the Mental Health Association gets funding from OMH, they get, I will just make up the number, because I don't know what it is off the top of my head, let's say they get $224,000, we'll they've gotten $224,000 for the last 20 years, because rent used to be $600 and now it's $1,200, that $224,000 doesn't go as far as it used to. So, now we have more

people on the waiting line and so they might be living at home and being 30, or they might be, you know there's just not a place for them to make a permanent home, because they can't afford it.

MASCARENAS: Yeah

MORSE: So, it's that population that I am talking about. And additionally, so if somebody goes to Clinton County and finds housing, but their plan is to come back to Essex County, the care managers that are providing services to that person aren't willing to always drive up to Clinton County anymore, because that's getting expensive and so the person is not getting the proper support that they could or should get, if they were in Essex County. So, it's becoming this kind of pluralist problem that I feel like we're, maybe I'm the one that needs to be louder in expressing the need, but I need your support.

MASCARENAS: I think you're bringing up a problem that plagues the entire generation of people in Essex County and in and around the Adirondack Park. I think it's much more complicated than any service provider can solve on their own.

MORSE: Right

MASCARENAS: In Essex County, 2,300 short term rentals, 2,300. Where is your housing going to occur? Your housing affordable housing is going to occur in the hamlet. When short term rentals are very profitable, it's driving up housing stock for everyone.

MORSE: And rental prices.

MASCARENAS: Right, assessed values, all those fun things end up happening. So, it's more attractive to have a short term rental than a long term rental.

MORSE: Absolutely, the clientele is easier to deal with.

MASCARENAS: Yes, dealing with the short term rental or lack there of that we have, I think helps in solving a lot of your problem and realizing that outside of our hamlets, we have very little option in terms of how we can build or what we can build in those areas, because we're heavily zoned and regulated. So, I think that's probably where our discussion needs to go. You're right, you've heard, I think Mr. Hughes, I think we've heard other members of this Board say it, we're not just after low income housing, we're after housing that are nurses can afford, that our teachers can afford, that our professional people that we need to continue to operate, what is the great experiment needs to be improved upon, because they're getting priced out. These are people that make pretty good livings that 20 years ago would have no problem with that kind of thing. So, I think what you're getting at is way bigger than what Mental Health, DSS or anyone can handle. I think it is this group as a whole and it starts with lobbying, it starts with changes to laws, it starts in recognition that there's a problem, which we've started that recognition here, but I don't think it's reached the ears that need to hear it and the people that can actually do something about it.

MURPHY: And Terri, I would add to that, we, Adirondack Roots being the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Provider, we have seen this for quite a long time. A lot of people just ported out of Essex County because you can take your voucher and you can move to another county, mainly because they couldn't find a place to live and we lost a lot of voucher holders that way and so that is a consistent problem. We do have the new New York State voucher program that we're doing both in Essex and Clinton Counties and we have actually had the same problem. They're struggling to find an individual and one of the places that we're looking at is the Lofts, the new build in Saranac Lake. It's technically on the Franklin County side of Saranac Lake, but as we all know Saranac Lake is split between counties and it's really very close and so, and we worked very closely with DSS, it's a great program and we're very excited. It's not a lot of vouchers, but at least it's something for people. So, I think that is a little bit, the hope is the Loft. I think it is 75 units, it's just about to open. It's lovely, it's right on the rail trail. It's LIHTC, so it's got a range of apartments at a range of different costs, and you know, that and Reagan's new development in Ticonderoga. I think as we get these newer, larger builds in and going that you will see a little bit of an easing. You know, when Reagan did their development in Lake Placid, we did see a little bit of that, but not as much as we hoped. That was 60 units, and so, but I think that was right in the heart of Lake Placid, it was also during the real ramp up of the short-term rentals and it came at the crucial time, because I think if we didn't have those 60-units, I would hate to see what might have happened and so we just have to, there is progress, but it is slow and it's hopefully happening and so I think there are those two things on the horizon that I do think will help with some of the supply and demand. But I agree, it is at all levels, you know one of the people that moved into the houses in Keene is a teacher and he had been evicted from two different long term rentals, each of them in Lake Placid that had turned into a short term rental. So, this is an issue that is happening and you can see it in the data that we have from the studies from Asterhill Research that the number of long term rentals has gone down by I think 12% in Essex County over two years and so it's, all of the has exasperated this problem and then the costs have gone up and agreed. We have that same problem, that is why Section 8 is closed. It is exactly the same problem as Mental Health Association is having. If you have a certain budget and rents are increasing, the number of vouchers that you can give out gets fewer and fewer and we have seen it. And most of the people that are on Section 8 are elderly or disabled and so you're seeing folks that have lived in our communities for a very long time, have contributed, hard workers, but you know have a limited amount of retainment, so qualify for Section 8 and they can't find a place in their own community that they've lived and built and been a part of and it's really tough to see that.

MORSE: So, what do we do about that?

MURPHY: Well, I think there are these things coming and they're slow and they're not going to be immediate, those solutions.

JUSTICE-GREEN: I think also, Terri, when I do meetings with people now who have like an idea for a project and basically go through a needs assessment with them and their organization, your organization can absolutely develop housing for your own exclusive needs, if you feel that that need is really critical to have like reserved housing for your demographic group, whatever number that is, whatever spread that is. You know whether it's like a multiple homes across the county that you break up into multiple units, I think it would be powerful if that, if you feel really strongly

that that's an immediate need that needs to be addressed to talk amongst your colleagues and say this is what we really need, we need this many units spread across this portion of the county reserved for people that are in multiple crisis that are looking for temporary and/or permanent housing and then when we're at that point, if through these other active projects that are happening, you're not seeing that need really alleviated, apply for the funding or work with us, collectively to try and find that funding and if that funding doesn't exist then we advocate for that funding. I think that's, I think being the canary in the coalmine is incredibly important, but at the same time, you know, I try and have like 3 plans going. If the shouting doesn't happen, then what's the action plan and if you can't complete that action plan on your own, you need help from the County and your partners that are here, it's just defining what that need actually is.

MORSE: Yes, so I guess I am here to say, help me, because housing of the population that the Community Services Board serves is like 1 out of 200 things on my list and I don't have the energy. And ESHY 10 just hit, so hopefully you guys can help get that figured out.

MASCARENAS: Right now, Terri, housing is on everyone's list.

MORSE: Yeah

MASCARENAS: Whether you're an employee or whether you have a mission that supports individuals, I think it's a huge issue for everybody. So, yeah, we've got to come up with some solutions on how to improve the circumstance.

MORSE: And we're stronger together.

MASCARENAS: Yeah

HUGHES: And this is the right place to bring it up and we ruminate on it and we figure out what potentially could happen, it might not happen today, but at least you brought it up and that way it is on the brain.

MORSE: Well, one of my concerns is that if people continue to be pushed to other counties, then that's going to affect our school systems, that's going to affect our workforce.

MASCARENAS: It already is.

O'BRYAN: It's already affected all of those.

MASCARENAS: Yup, it already is.

MORSE: Right

O'BRYAN: It's almost time to end, but I am just going to say one thing, assessed values; when we talk about those, you know along as we move to 100% assessed values, every single year, prices on those properties are going to go up and their going to drive us out, eventually and that's the unfortunate part of this. That's one piece of it. The other piece of this is across New York

State, we have loss mass amounts of manufacturing dollars, manufacturing dollars are the base dollars that you anchor on to have other businesses pop up to help you with your economy, so you can afford to live here. So, Mike's right, these are all very complicated issues, they are ongoing, a lot of people are looking at them, if we see Bright Sand, this company that is looking at coming to Ticonderoga to Sylvamo Paper, in the end they will have 200 high paying jobs available to the county, to the folks of the county, and I was with the, I told the Chairman I was with Assembly Speaker Heastie, last week and mentioned that to him and where do we put them? The first thing he said to me, you need housing. I said, yeah absolutely, where do we put them. I know something that you over there, Nicole's group working on all the time and there are many others, ROOST and everybody else working with the Land Bank and everyone, Roots working on this, this is a problem.

HUGHES: Mr. Follos, final word and then we'll adjourn.

FOLLOS: Did you say that the number of long term rentals has decreased by 12% in two years?

MURPHY: I believe that is it but can send you the exact. I think that's it, but I'm losing my memory and I'm not going to say that that's entirely reliable, but yeah, it was actually Essex County Planning Office did a study, and I can share that with you, Asterhill Research and they documented, the change.

JUSTICE-GREEN: And are we putting these studies on the County website somewhere? Because I know we've referenced this study many times. I know this is your first term, but it might be nice to have, between a blighted property, that study, the link to the…

MASCARENAS: We have at least.

DESANTIS: Yeah, yours in on our website, but we are happy to share it with you.

HUGHES: Thanks for your contributions, everyone. We will see you in July, have a good one.

THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS TASK FORCE WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:03 PM.

Respectively Submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy Clerk
Board of Supervisors