

**Finland Home Solutions Monthly Meeting**

**Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 5:30-7:00pm**

Clair Nelson Community Center - Finland, MN

- I. June's regular meeting called to order at 5:42 p.m.
  - A. In attendance: Rachel Clark (Chair), Lise Abazs (Secretary), Jonathan Beauchane, BJ Kohlstedt, Nancy Olson, David (Slim), Charlotte Hughes, Stacy Breden, Scott Robinson, Sarah Mayer, Annie Trotta, Michael Miller, Ursula Lang (online), Colby Abazs (online)
  - B. Review meeting agenda and approve changes or additions: Motion to approve by Rachel Clark, Second by Jonathan Beauchane, passed by unanimous consent.
- II. Approve past meeting minutes
  - A. May 7 regular meeting minutes: Motion to approve by Rachel Clark, Second by Nancy Olson, passed by unanimous consent.
  - B. May 12 Septic Alternatives Team meeting minutes (unofficial): Motion to approve by Rachel Clark, Second by Sarah Mayer, Passed by unanimous consent.
- III. ESMC Updates
  - A. Tracy & Ursula have arranged for another \$15,000 for the Finland Housing Project from ESMC/RSDP/U of MN. There is no specific deadline for spending these funds so they can be stretched out as long as necessary.
    1. Discussion whether Friends of Finland could provide the fiscal sponsorship for these funds, but Arlene has said the organization does not have the capacity for that yet. Working under the Township umbrella is more complicated but also lends legitimacy to the project and builds relationships that will be necessary to make larger scale projects possible.
    2. To continue under Township fiscal sponsorship, the group needs:
      - a) Town Board to pass a resolution establishing a housing commission at the June 17 regular town meeting.
      - b) The housing group will bring the recommended resolution language and identify:
        - (1) Members of the Commission: Rachel Clark, Sarah Mayer, Colby Abazs, Charlotte Hughes, Michael Miller  
Discussion: must be an odd number and ideally be at least 5 members so that more than one member can be present at work group meetings and not be in breach of public meeting rules that are required when a quorum is present.
        - (2) Compensation: for Commission members: \$25/hour plus mileage reimbursement for work plan related activities, \$30/meeting stipend for other attendees.  
Discussion: meeting stipends for the general public encourages attendance and increases input to the project, but the amount to budget may be unpredictable. Putting

the language in the resolution makes it an option but does not require it to be carried out for every meeting (i.e. if funds are running low).

3. New housing commission's first meeting will be July 2 to organize and:

- a) Confirm Finland Home Solutions as name of the group.
- b) Identify Chair of the commission

Discussion: Rachel's hours are more limited going forward than they have been the past few months. She was averaging 8-10 hrs/wk. Going forward could do 2-5 hrs/wk. She is ready to pass the torch if there is someone ready to carry it, but will stay on if necessary. Co-chairs not allowed, but could be a vice-chair.

Discussion that it would be best to have the work split up amongst the board members, maybe one leader for each "Team".

- (a) Rachel Clark (Community Land Trust Team), Sarah Mayer (Septic Alternatives/County Relationships), Colby Abazs (Dream Team)

c) Determine work plan and budget.

B. Coordinate updated work plan for ESMC - Phase 3 / deliverables (Ursula)

- a) Rachel and Ursula will check in on Friday to get a clear sense of what the priorities are in the next few months. Others could join this meeting if it would be useful.
- b) Group should put thought into when it makes sense to do more community engagement (presenting materials, getting feedback, celebrating accomplishments).
- c) Areas of work to think about 1) One Roof Housing proposal, 2) Dream Team visual materials, considering a stronger partnership with Wolf Ridge and considering a specific parcel to imagine possibilities, will wait to spend time on this until there is a clearer path forward, BJ will update Rachel on where this is at, 3) see if there are further avenues to explore with the Septic Alternatives Team, 4) ADU ordinance with BJ as a test case to see how we can work with the county >> Ursula will revise the scope/workplan to reflect these, and especially the critical points when more involvement might be helpful from FHS and the broader community, as well as strategies for community engagement.

IV. Team Updates

A. Septic Alternatives Team - Annie, Sarah, Slim, Charlotte, BJ, Rachel

- 1. Drafted community wastewater survey - Information gathered in the survey will help support a petition to Lake County to accommodate septic alternatives.

a) Clarifications from Stacy, Town Clerk:

- (1) Can't use voters list to disseminate the survey. The use of the list of registered voters for purposes unrelated to

elections, political activities or law enforcement is a violation of Minnesota law. (Minn. Statutes 201.091)

- (2) Surveys need approval from the Town Board. Any petition needs approval if use of the information is to help change ordinances in any way. Will need approval to share information with the County.
  - b) Survey information and link will be shared with Stacy by the middle of next week to share with the Town Board before the June 17th Town Meeting. Hard copies need to be filed in the Clerk's Office.
  - c) After approval, Link can go out in the Finland Food Chain newsletter. Stacy can share the link on the Town website but it cannot be posted on Facebook or other social media where sharing and commenting is uncontrolled. Can post an ad in the NSJournal telling where to pick up printed copies at Clair Nelson Center and Finland Co-op.

Discussion: Should incentives be offered for filling out survey? May not be practical - survey is anonymous, tracking how many times someone fills it out, etc.

- 2. UMN Extension Septic Resources available for reference
- 3. Scott Robinson - Has discussed the Cook County package of examples with Lake County - some of it fits this county, some doesn't, some pushes the limits of what's allowed by the State. Current regulations are heavy handed, PCA sets minimum standards, county establishes an ordinance that administers state rules and can deviate with approval from the State standards.

Discussion: So many inconsistencies in guidelines and rules! MN Pollution Control Agency regulates subservice septic, but not self-contained systems (composting, incinerating). MN Dept of Labor & Industry regulates plumbing and states that every residence must have a flush toilet. Cook County compost toilets. Lake County "alternative local standards" allows privies but not composting units.

- a) Monday, June 16, 3 p.m. County Planning Commission meeting to discuss proposed ordinance language (Rachel, BJ, Sarah, Scott will be attending).
  - (1) Where are there specific leverage points with the county to identify where we need the change. Scott is willing to work with us to determine how to ask for strategic changes... County is more receptive than MPCA. Should we bring up the Cook County ordinance as an example? Ask if they can bend without ordinance?

- 4. Septic funds - Stacy will talk to Grant Hauschild (and Roger Skraba) about funding that might be available for septic upgrades. AEOA, USDA, BWSR are possibilities. Cook County has a program that assesses the

cost of a septic system over 10 years through property taxes. Lake County has programs through HRA. Income based grant money available for housing with noncompliant systems, but not for new systems.

**B. County Team - BJ, Colby, Ursula, Rachel**

1. BJ & Rachel attended the Lake County HRA meeting 5/14. They were excited to have folks from Finland there. Most of the conversation was focused on ongoing/potential developments. Got lots of phone numbers from Paul Iverson as well as opportunities for rehab, energy assistance and rural development opportunities. It felt important to have a Finland presence there to make connections to people and opportunities. Met Jason Hale, Finland resident, former director of Cook County HRA. Next meeting: Wed 6/11 in Two Harbors, 6pm.
2. Important opportunity: \$10,000 available in home rehab funds for income-eligible homeowners through Lake County HRA. Flyer available, spread the word! Funds will likely be claimed fast. Going live July 1st. Contact Matt Johnson. Rachel will email flyer to committee members and Stacy to print out and have copies available at the Clair Nelson Center.

**C. Community Land Trust Team - BJ, Meghan, Rachel**

1. No major updates.
2. Rachel will contact One Roof by the next meeting :)

**D. Dream Team - Colby, Ursula, Nancy, Rachel**

1. MDC/ESMC: Ready to start in earnest, with some direction from FHS.
2. Wolf Ridge parcel possibility ?

**E. Momentum Team - Meghan, Ursula, Tracy, Rachel**

1. ESMC Funding (see above)
2. This team can RETIRE! We've got a plan!!

**V. Additional Topics**

**A. Checking in on the local contractor list: Annie & Jonathan -**

1. Has started a list, will include not just licensed contractors but also anyone with particular skills.

**B. Checking in on goals/action steps from last month:**

<b>Goal/Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>Support needed?</b>
Petition County to allow septic alternatives	Annie, Colby, Jonathan, Septic Team		
CLT meeting with	Ursula, Rachel,		

One Roof Housing, Rachel organize	Stacy, CLT Team, Matt Johnson		
ADU ordinance options	Ursula & BJ		
Propose Comp Plan revision process to Township Board	Town has a planning commission to address this.	Current	Anyone can attend to give input
Organize & print UMN Extension septic resources	Annie & Rachel	July meeting	
Revise community Septic Survey	BJ & Sarah (Ursula available - if helpful, just FYI)	Ready to be approved by town board	

VI. Setting goals/action steps for next month:

A. Carryover from last month

VII. Next regular meeting: Wednesday, July 2 from 5:30-7:00pm

VIII. Adjourn @7:34 p.m.

Motion made by Rachel Clark, Second by BJ Kohlstedt, passed by unanimous consent.

Rachel Clark

Rachel Clark- Outreach Coordinator

Lise Abazs

Lise Abazs- Secretary

Attest

Stacy Breden  
Stacy Breden - Town Clerk

ORIGINAL

