State of Vermont — Chartered in 1781
MORRISTOWN

TOWN OF MORRISTOWN HOUSING COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTICE & AGENDA
COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM OF THE OLD TEGU THEATER
43 Portland Street in Morrisville, VT 05661
5:00 PM Thursday, December 12, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVE MINUTES

1. Approve November 14th meeting minutes

DISCUSS

1. Meet with local builders of smaller and more affordable homes
2. Draft affordable housing letter to Planning Council
3. Affordable housing letters previously sent to the Selectboard & Village Streets
4. Mutual assistance discussion with Stowe Housing Committee (Judy)

/

Morristown/Morrisville Housing Committee
PO Box 748 / Morrisville, VT 05661
Phone (802) 888-6373

Meeting Minutes of Thursday 14 November 2024

Committee Members present: Judy Bickford, Bob Bortree, Josh Goldstein -electronically
Committee Members absent: Yvette Mason, Donna Sherlaw
Guests present: Conservation Commission Member Ron Stancliff
Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Town Offices, 43 Portland Street in Morrisville, at approximately 5:05 P.M.

Vote: Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Bickford moved to approve the September 12th meeting minutes. A vote of 3-0 affirmed the motion. Member Bortree moved to approve the October 10th meeting minutes. A vote of 3-0 affirmed the motion.

Discuss: Legislative Body letters asking for tools to entice new affordable housing – Mr. Thomas said that the Village Trustees acknowledged receipt of the Housing Committee's October letter and scheduled an agenda item for November 20th at 5:30 PM. Mr. Thomas was asked to follow-up with the Town Manager for the same acknowledgment and agenda item from the Selectboard. Member Bickford said that the Trustees allowed the hookup fees to be paid at closing for the Habitat Homes on the corner of Maple & Olive Streets, and it would be great if that practice could be codified for all projects that contain permanent affordable housing.

Discuss: Future Land Use Map – The Committee looked at the Town Plan's Future Land Use Map and discussed areas where the Low Density Residential Zone (LDR) could be expanded to create more housing opportunities on 1/3 acre to 1/2 acre lots. On said map, the Committee focused on connecting LDR1 to LDR5 and LDR5 to LDR4. Mr. Thomas was directed to draft a letter to the Planning Council suggesting such a zoning change, with said letter reviewed at the next committee meeting. Mr. Thomas was also asked to invite active builders of small homes in Morrisville to the next Housing Committee meeting, including Seth Costa, Jane & Nathan Barbour, and Bob Provost (as requested by Member Goldstein). Member Bickford said that she would reach out to the Stowe Housing Committee to see if the 2 housing committees could help each other.

Discuss: Example of successful affordable housing density bonuses – The committee reviewed New Haven's density bonus, which was designed to entice 20% of new housing to be affordable. After committee discussion, Mr. Thomas related that some towns require the developer, via permit condition, to annually self-certify that the affordable housing created by the density bonus was being used by qualified residents. The committee asked Mr. Thomas to draft a separate letter asking the Planning Council to review and consider adopting a similar affordable housing density bonus.

State of Vermont Chartered in 1781
MORRISTOWN

Housing Committee
PO Box 748
Morrisville, VT 05661

(802) 888-6373
Fax: (802) 851-7251

5 December 2024

Re: Request to connect Future Land Use Map's LDR Zones & adopt a density bonus

Dear Planning Council Members,

As you are all surely aware, the cost to purchase a home in our community has grown exponentially in recent years. According to page 132 of the recently updated Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment, the median for-sale price of a single-family home in March of 2024 was \$699,000 and per page 131 of that report, a typical household (2 people) earning 120% of the "area median income" can only afford a maximum home price of \$324,000. This huge \$375,000 affordability gap creates a plethora of negative consequences that ripple through our local economy and community, including hampered business growth due to the difficulty of attracting and retaining workers, reduced consumer spending, increased homelessness, strains on public services, and wider income inequality. Page 141 of the Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment, which is included beneath this letter and labeled as Attachment A, offers solutions that push back on local housing affordability issues and the aforementioned negative consequences. Fortunately, many of the solutions offered therein are within the power of the Planning Council to act on or at least initiate.

If the Planning Council wants more single-family homes and duplexes developed, especially housing that will be owned, the Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment suggests rezoning areas that can accommodate housing development on smaller and more affordable lots. The Housing Committee understands that the zoning changes that the Planning Council can make (without redoing the Town Plan) are limited to what is shown on its Future Land Use Map. After carefully evaluating this map (which is included beneath this letter and labeled as Attachment B), the Housing Committee strongly supports expanding the Low Density Residential Zone (LDR) to the parts of town that can accommodate these more affordable 1/3 acre to 1/2 acre lots. The Housing Committee believes the unincorporated villages of Cadys Falls & Morristown Corners are perfect parts of town to rezone existing RRA land to create new single-family homes and duplexes on smaller and more affordable thanks to municipal water already being available on-site. As such, the Housing Committee hopes that the Planning Council can be nimble enough to act on the Town Plan's Future Land Use Map suggestion of connecting the LDR1 to LDR5 zones and the LDR4 to LDR5 zones as part of the next zoning change effort.

Page 88 of the recently updated Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment shows that 24% of rents paid in our county are classified as unaffordable (paying 40% or more of income towards rent). Unfortunately, 123 families in our town are almost unbelievably paying more than 50% of their income towards rent. While a good amount of new rental housing has been built in our town in recent years, the Housing Committee would like to see the Zoning Bylaws updated to offer a density bonus to incentivize new rental housing development that includes a 20% affordability component. An example of such a density bonus from the Zoning Bylaws of a Vermont town is included beneath this letter and labeled as Attachment C. Like the aforementioned LDR Zone expansions, the Housing Committee hopes that this density bonus, perhaps tailored to local needs, can be included as part of the Planning Council's upcoming zoning change.

In closing, developers are faced with significant restrictions and costly delays during the State permit process, and even via the Town's own Zoning Bylaws. They need the assistance of the Planning Council now if we all have any hope of addressing the significant affordable housing supply and affordability issues that currently plague nearly every aspect of our community. The Housing Committee cannot make these needed zoning changes on its own. Therefore, we are very thankful for whatever time and attention the Council can give to this letter and the two zoning change suggestions included therein. If desired, members of the Housing Committee will be happy to attend the Planning Council meeting when this letter is discussed.

Sincerely,
The undersigned members of the Morristown Housing Committee

Judy Bickford   Bob Bortree   Josh Goldstein

Yvette Mason   Donna Sherlaw

Attachment A

Households that qualify for affordable/tax credit rents typically can't find a quality housing option in the open market.

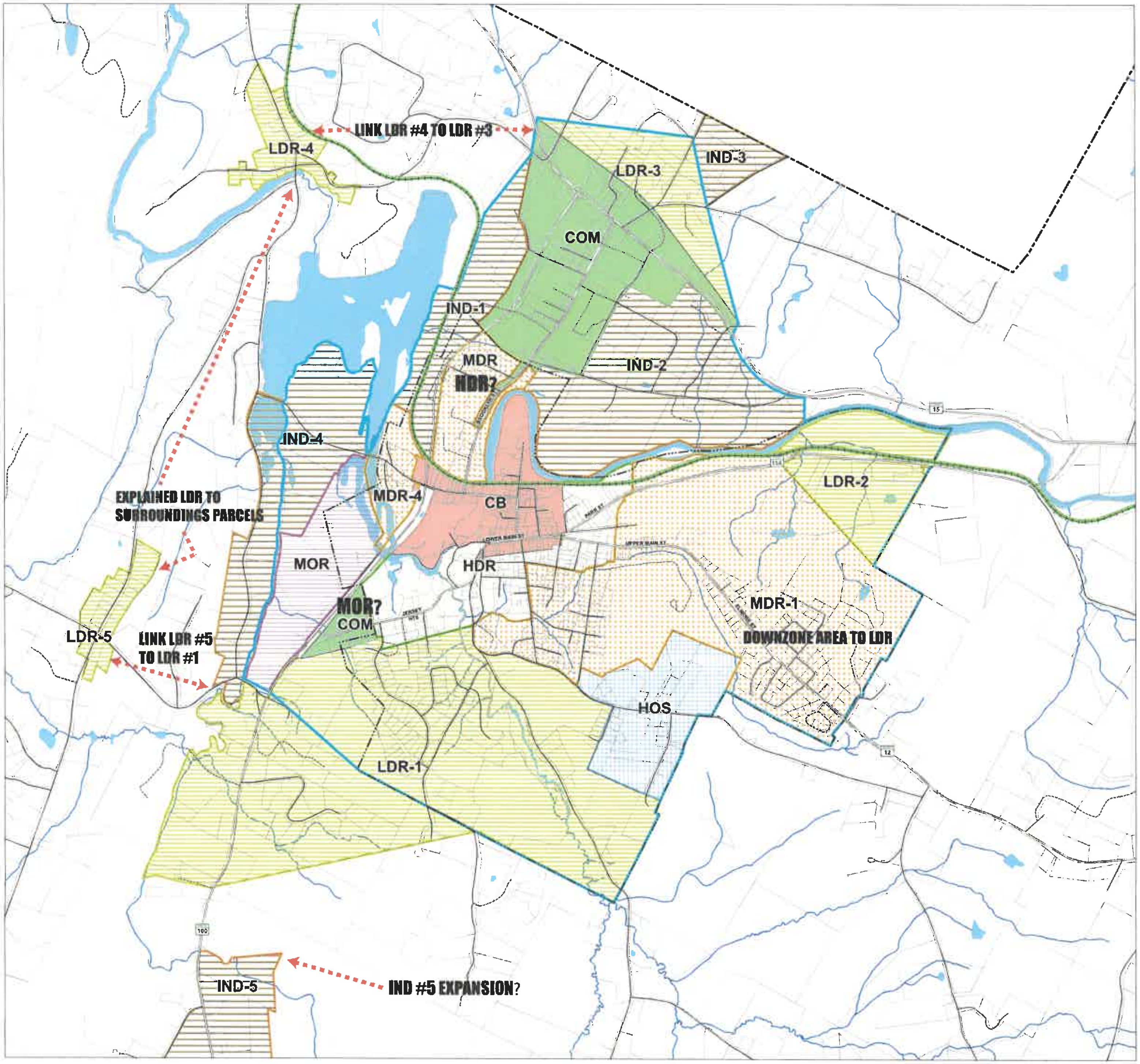
- Work to diversify housing availability in the region, from rental/ownership, pricing and form of housing perspectives – with the goal of providing more opportunities for younger and moderate income households to find housing. The study region as a whole has the advantage of available land and, in most communities, a positive perspective on new residential development. However, the absence of readily available infrastructure (water, sewer, utilities) is often a cost prohibitive element of land development. Communities should be encouraged to partner with the development community in providing support infrastructure for new residential development, such as:

  - Altering regulations (zoning, etc.) to permit housing at density/scale that achieves economic feasibility to the private sector;
  - In identified areas, ease the regulatory framework to lighten the cost burden of securing entitlements and providing a rapid indication of project acceptability;
  - Cost sharing with respect to critical project infrastructure – road, sewer, water utility systems;
  - Easing infrastructure connection fees for projects that meet certain criteria – density, affordability, etc;
  - Tax stabilization agreements;

5

Attachment B

Morristown Zoning Map
Village Zoning
2019



Zoning Districts

CB, HOS, MDR, COM, IND, MOR, HDR, LDR, RRA

Morrisville
Morristown Boundary
Sewer Service Management Area
Lamoille Valley Rail Trail
Parcel Boundaries

Zoning Districts

CB	Central Business
COM	Commercial
HDR	High Density Residential
HOS	Hospital
IND	Industrial
LDR	Low Density Residential
MDR	Medium Density Residential
MOR	Mixed Office Residential
RRA	Rural Residential with Agriculture

Data Sources

Zoning: 2017 Morristown data, Provided by Lamoille County Planning Commission for Planning Purposes; Updated 2019 by Fitzgerald Environmental Associates, LLC

Sewer Service District Boundary: 2015 Morristown data, Provided by Lamoille County Planning Commission for Planning Purposes; Updated 2019 by Fitzgerald Environmental Associates, LLC

Parcels: Morristown data, 2017, by CAI Technologies

Surface Water: VCGI for VHD-USGS, 2001

Political Boundaries: VCGI, 1991

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Transverse Mercator
VT State Plane, Meters
NAD 1983

For planning purposes only.
Not for regulatory interpretation.

Prepared By:
Fitzgerald Environmental Associates, LLC
18 Severance Green, Suite 203
Colchester, VT 05446
Telephone: 802.876.7778

Map Dated: June 6, 2019

Attachment C

New Haven, VT Zoning excerpt

ARTICLE IV: REQUIRED REGULATIONS

Section 400: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A. Intent: The provisions of this Section are intended to:

1) provide incentives for residential development that meets the needs of New Haven's population, including housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, in accordance with V.S.A. §4412(1), 4417(a)(2) and(d);
2) increase opportunities for home ownership and rental units;
3) allow for the development of a variety of affordable housing types including single- and two-family dwellings, and multi-family units;
4) ensure that affordable housing units will remain affordable and available into the future; and,
5) encourage mixed-income development.

per Peggy in New Haven this is a new bylaw on the mgmt of the new affordable units will be a permit condition for the developer to deal with

B. General Standard: For a proposed development to qualify for the incentives in this Section, at least 20% of the residential units in the development must qualify as "affordable housing units" as defined in Article X.

C. Application Requirements:

Applications that seek to qualify for the incentives under this Section shall be reviewed by the Development Review Board, either in association with subdivision review where applicable (subdivisions and planned unit developments), or as a conditional use for development that does not require subdivision review (e.g., development, conversions, or adaptive re-uses on existing lots).

The applicant shall provide legal documentation to be approved by the Town's counsel, including, at minimum, the proposed deed restrictions or covenants that will ensure that the affordable housing units in the development will satisfy the requirements of this Section and the definition in Article X.

D. Density Bonus Incentives for Affordable Housing:

1) A development that meets the requirements of Section B above, and includes fewer than 5 affordable housing units will qualify for a 50% density bonus. As such, the standard minimum acreage requirement per development unit that would otherwise apply under Section 223 will be reduced by 50%.
2) A development that meets the requirements of Section B above, and includes between 5 and 9 affordable housing units will qualify for a 67% density bonus. As such, the standard minimum acreage requirement per development unit that would otherwise apply under Section 223 will be reduced by 67%.
3) A development unit that meets the requirements of Section B above, and includes 10 or more affordable housing units will qualify for a 75% density bonus. As such, the standard minimum acreage requirement per development unit that would otherwise apply under Section 223 will be reduced by 75%.

E. Modifications of Waivers for Affordable Housing:

The Development Review Board, upon written request of the applicant, may modify or waive any of the following requirements for a project that meets the requirements of Section B, if it finds that the modification or waiver is necessary to improve the financial feasibility of the affordable housing component of the project, and that public health, safety, and welfare will not be jeopardized:

1) access requirements;
2) parking requirements;
3) subdivision standards including, but not limited to, applicable road standards;
4) minimum lot size, frontage, setback, coverage, and open space requirements, as allowed for planned unit developments.

Section 410: ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory Dwelling Units are a permitted use in all districts and must be in compliance with all of the following:

1. The property must have sufficient wastewater capacity to accommodate both the primary dwelling and the accessory dwelling unit.
2. The unit must not exceed 900 square feet or 30% of the total habitable floor area of the primary dwelling unit, whichever is greater.
3. All setback, lot coverage and parking conditions are met for the zone in which it is proposed.

Section 420: ACCESSORY USES AND BUILDINGS

1. An accessory use or building must conform to lot setback, lot coverage, and building height requirements for the district in which it is located.
2. An accessory use or building that is associated with a residential use shall be required to conform to the residential yard setback, lot coverage and building height requirements for the district in which it is located.

Section 421: EXISTING SMALL LOTS

Any lot in individual and separate and non-affiliated ownership from surrounding properties in existence on the effective date of these Regulations, March 7, 1972, may be developed for the purposes permitted in the district in which it is located, even though not conforming to minimum lot size requirements if such lot is not less than 1/8 acre in area with a minimum width or depth dimension of 40 feet.

Section 422: FRONTAGE ON, OR ACCESS TO, PUBLIC ROADS OR PUBLIC WATERS

No land development may be permitted on lots which do not meet the minimum frontage on public roads or public waters as stated in the Zoning Districts Table (page 9), or accessed by a right-of-way (ROW) of at least 20 feet in width, or with the approval of the Development Review Board. Additional width may be necessary to meet B-71 Standards for Residential-Commercial Drives (see Appendix).

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Housing Committee
PO Box 748
Morrisville, VT 05661

(802) 888-6373
Fax: (802) 851-7251

10 October 2024

Re: Request to offer utility cost sharing for new development that contains affordable housing

Dear Village Trustees,

As you are all surely aware, the cost to rent an apartment or purchase a home in our community has grown exponentially in recent years. According to page 132 of the recently updated Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment, the median for-sale price of a single-family home in March of 2024 was \$699,000 and per page 131 of that report, a typical household (2 people) earning 120% of the "area median income" can only afford a maximum home price of \$324,000.. For renters, page 88 of this report shows that 24% of rents paid in our county are classified as unaffordable (paying 40% or more of income towards rent). Unfortunately, 123 families in our town are almost unbelievably paying more than 50% of their income towards rent. Private housing developers, who face significant restrictions from the State and even the Town's own Zoning Bylaws, cannot be counted on to address the deep affordable housing problems within our community on their own. The Town must instead be proactive about incentivizing the creation of new housing, especially housing that contains an affordability component that is deed restricted. Therefore, the Morristown Housing Committee, as our first act as a Board appointed by the Selectboard, respectfully requests that the Village Trustees agree to offer cost sharing or savings on all utility connections and sewer allocation charges on all new commercial (aka multi-family) housing developments that contain a percentage of affordable housing that is deed restricted per 24 VSA §4303 (1-2). This cost sharing of utilities is specifically called out as one of the best tools our community has to create more housing affordability by page 141 of the Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment (attached). If the Village Trustees agree to make this kind of utility cost sharing or savings available, it can be marketed to entice developers to build housing within our community that has a deed restricted affordability component. We firmly believe that having this economic development tool available to local developers will allow them to break ground on new housing developments that otherwise would be unlikely to get built for financial reasons.

Thank you in advance for whatever time and attention that the Village Trustees will give to this utility cost sharing / cost savings request. If desired, members of the Housing Committee will be happy to attend the Trustee's next meeting when this letter and request are discussed.

Sincerely,
The undersigned members of the Morristown Housing Committee

Judy Bickford	Bob Bortree	Josh Goldstein
Yvette Mason	Donna Sherlaw	

State of Vermont Chartered in 1781
MORRISTOWN

Housing Committee
PO Box 748
Morrisville, VT 05661

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10 October 2024

Re: Request to offer Tax Stabilization for new development that contains affordable housing

Dear Selectboard Members,

As you are all surely aware, the cost to rent an apartment or purchase a home in our community has grown exponentially in recent years. According to page 132 of the recently updated Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment, the median for-sale price of a single-family home in March of 2024 was $699,000 and per page 131 of that report, a typical household (2 people) earning 120% of the "area median income" can only afford a maximum home price of $324,000. For renters, page 88 of this report shows that 24% of rents paid in our county are classified as unaffordable (paying 40% or more of income towards rent). Unfortunately, 123 families in our town are almost unbelievably paying more than 50% of their income towards rent. Private housing developers, who face significant restrictions from the State and even the Town's own Zoning Bylaws, cannot be counted on to address the deep affordable housing problems within our community on their own. The Town must instead be proactive about incentivizing the creation of new housing, especially housing that contains an affordability component that is deed restricted per 24 VSA §4303 (1-2). Therefore, the Morristown Housing Committee, as our first act as a Board appointed by the Selectboard, respectfully requests that the Selectboard agree to offer Tax Stabilization on all new commercial (aka multi-family) housing developments that contain a percentage of affordable housing that is deed restricted per 24 VSA §4303 (1-2). As most of these future development sites will come from vacant or underutilized land, we recommend that any municipal Tax Stabilization granted, per 24 VSA §2741(a)(1), be fixed and maintained at the value of the property at the time of the request for a 5-year period. Tax Stabilization is specifically called out as one of the best tools our community can use to create more housing affordability by page 141 of the Lamoille County Regional Housing Assessment (attached). If the Selectboard agrees to make this kind of municipal tax savings available, it can be marketed to entice developers to build housing, especially affordable housing, within our community. We firmly believe that having this economic development tool available to local developers will allow them to break ground on new housing developments that otherwise would not be bult for financial reasons.

Thank you in advance for the time and attention that the Selectboard will give to this Tax Stabilization request. If desired, members of the Housing Committee will be happy to attend the Selectboard meeting when this letter and Tax Stabilization request are discussed.

Sincerely,
The undersigned members of the Morristown Housing Committee

Judy Bickford   Bob Bortree   Josh Goldstein

Yvette Mason   Donna Sherlaw