

Town of Fairfield
Office of Community & Economic Development
Affordable Housing Committee
March 9, 2022

The Affordable Housing Committee of the Town of Fairfield held its Regular Meeting on Wednesday, March 9, 2022. The meeting was held via Zoom as well as in person in the First Floor Conference Room of Sullivan Independence Hall.

PRESENT: Steve Grathwohl; Joanne Csonka; Heather Dubrosky; Gwynne Alperovic; Janice Bouloubasis; Nina Velez.

ALSO: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Grathwohl called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES: A motion to accept the minutes of the February 9, 2022 regular meeting was made by Ms. Csonka and seconded by Ms. Velez. The motion was accepted unanimously.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN:

Mr. Barnhart noted that he had disseminated updated drafts of the executive summary and full report. Mr. Barnhart discussed the upcoming joint workshop with the Town Plan & Zoning (TPZ) Commission, and expressed hope that the meeting would focus on the proposed strategies in the draft plan, particularly those that pertain to land use policies and require TPZ support. He suggested that AHC members should be prepared to provide details at the March 14th joint planning workshop to be held at the Fairfield Museum & History Center.

Mr. Grathwohl asked about the numeric goals in the plan, which still need to be completed. Mr. Barnhart suggested that the AHC gather input during the upcoming workshop then work with his office and the consultant to fill in those numbers prior to the May public hearing. Mr. Grathwohl asked why Fairfield was at the bottom of the towns listed on page 7 in terms of the percentage of affordable units. Mr. Barnhart said that it has much to do with the composition of the affordable housing inventory and that deed-restricted units make up a significant percentage of our inventory. By comparison, he noted that CHFA-backed mortgages or units receiving tenant-based rental assistance, two variables outside of any community's direct control, make up a significant share of the inventory of many communities, but not Fairfield. Mr. Barnhart also pointed out that the numbers reported in the draft plan need to be updated to reflect the most recent State data.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT:

Mr. Grathwohl said there was not much discussion of the Annual Report at the RTM meeting, but several RTM members expressed disappointment that the Town hasn't achieved a moratorium or done more with monies from the Housing Trust Fund. Another member asked if blighted properties could be purchased and rehabbed as affordable units. Mr. Barnhart indicated that he had looked at the list of blighted properties, but was only interested in working with willing sellers. Mr. Barnhart noted that the Town is using CDBG funds to help rehab investor owned properties in exchange for a deed restriction keeping the unit affordable.

OLD BUSINESS AND UPDATES

Mr. Barnhart distributed a list of CGS 8-30g development applications covering 22 properties from 08/26/08 to 01/25/2022, on which the TPZ has rendered a decision. He noted that 21 of the 22 decisions have occurred in the last ten years. Of the fifteen applications that were approved, only six have been built, while another two are in construction.

In response to a question, Mr. Barnhart mentioned that Fairfield needs at least 3 more projects to reach deed-restricted status.

Housing Trust Fund: Mr. Barnhart reported that the Trust Fund had a current balance of \$151,000.

Parkview Commons: Mr. Barnhart provided a quick update, noting that three of the four units acquired to date have holdover tenants. Of the four lots acquired, only two directly abut one another. Mr. Barnhart observed that it would be better to aggregate at least an acre of contiguous property to facilitate the redevelopment process.

An RFQ has gone out to prospective developers relative to the opportunity to develop 244 Greenfield Street. Responses are due March 17, 2022.

Mr. Barnhart reported on his conversation with the Fairfield Housing Authority. Apparently another entity has made a competing (and higher) offer on the Biro Street property.

The Committee discussed several bills pending before the General Assembly that have housing implications: HB 5204 (fair share allocation); HB 5429 (Transit Oriented design); HB 169 (regarding records).

Mr. Barnhart provided a quick overview of the CDBG program and noted that his Department will be conducting a public hearing to help determine potential uses of CDBG funds to address housing and community development needs.

Mr. Grathwohl recognized departing members Ms. Lyons and Ms. Sammarco for their many contributions to the work of the AHC during their tenure.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

The next monthly meeting is Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner