

Town of Fairfield  
Office of Community & Economic Development  
Affordable Housing Committee  
June 8, 2022

The Affordable Housing Committee of the Town of Fairfield held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, June 8, 2022 in the Second Floor Conference Room of the Old Town Hall. The meeting was also held via Zoom.

PRESENT: Steve Grathwohl; Joanne Csonka; Heather Dubrosky; Janice Bouloubasis; Nina Velez; Gwynne Alperovich; Urb Leimkuhler

ALSO: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Grathwohl called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. He noted that due to the format of the meeting only members of the committee would be permitted to contribute.

#### MINUTES

A motion was made and duly seconded to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of April 13, 2022, and the special meeting of May 18, 2022. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN:

Mr. Grathwohl thanked the AHC members for their participation in the development of the Affordable Housing Plan.

Mr. Barnhart noted that the Affordable Housing Plan was submitted to the state by the deadline of June 1, 2022, and that he received acknowledgment of receipt from OPM. The Plan is available for viewing on the Town's website. Mr. Grathwohl mentioned that the two main goals of the plan were to broaden the range of housing options and to reach the 8-30g moratorium. He suggested that committee members select a few of the action items to implement. Mr. Barnhart suggested that the Committee be mindful of other Town goals such as the completion of the Plan of Conservation and Development and the Town's Zoning Regulations. Mr. Barnhart will invite TPZ staff to a future meeting of the AFC to discuss the POCD update.

A motion was made and seconded to add to the agenda a review of the affordability plan submitted for 15 Unquowa Road, which carried unanimously. Mr. Barnhart noted that the Town Plan & Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing next week on a proposed 63-unit set aside development for 15 Unquowa Road. Mr. Barnhart stated that

he had reviewed the affordability plan submitted in conjunction with this application, and shared his findings with the Committee on areas where the plan fell short of expectations. Issues that Mr. Barnhart identified included the proposed breakdown and distribution of the affordable units as well as compliance with ADA regulations. Members also expressed concern regarding the number of parking spaces allocated for the building as well as scale and density of the development and its potential impact on local infrastructure.

A motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously to authorize Mr. Grathwohl to submit a letter to TPZ expressing the Committee's concerns based on the staff's review of the proposed plans.

## OLD BUSINESS & UPDATES

Mr. Grathwohl will work with a subcommittee of the AHC to develop guidelines for use of the Housing Trust Fund.

The AHC will continue to search for funding to advance some of the plan's proposals.

Mr. Leimkuhler said his survey of town owned property with water and sewer access is available. He recommends very few of them as potential development sites for affordable housing. He asked committee members to look at the list and develop some criteria to be used in evaluating property.

Mr. Barnhart provided a brief update on the Greenfield Street and Parkview Commons developments. Mr. Barnhart reported that several more properties might become available for purchase at Parkview Commons.

There is no change in the estimated number of points toward a potential 8-30g moratorium.

Mr. Barnhart mentioned that there is no change in the status of the Turner Reserve property though there may be some action by fall.

Members discussed holding an election to appoint a vice-chair. Mr. Barnhart noted that Roberts Rules do not require a Vice-Chair, but a Secretary instead. The Committee will discuss additional officers in addition to the Chair at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, July 13, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner

## Possible findings:

- CGS 8-30g requires that in a set aside development “...not less than fifteen percent of all dwelling units in the development shall be sold or rented to persons and families whose income is less than or equal to sixty percent of the median income and the remainder of the dwelling units...be sold or rented to persons and families whose income is less than or equal to eighty percent of the median income.” While the narrative description indicates that ten of the nineteen affordable units will be designated to persons or households with incomes at or below 60% of the median income, the plans show only nine (9) units so designated. The Plans should be revised and the Introduction to the applicant’s draft Affordability Plan should be amended to reflect the statutory language and requirements.
- The applicant’s draft Affordability Plan suggests that the construction of this project will be phased in such a way that units will be offered for rent on a pro rata basis as they are completed, which seems impractical. Rather, we would have anticipated that the project would be built in a single phase with all affordable units being completed at the same time as their market-rate unit equivalents and offered for rent at the same time.
- The applicant’s draft Affordability Plan makes limited reference to the nature of construction and provides no assurances that the affordable units will be of a construction quality that is substantially equivalent to the market rate units within the development. While the proposed text amendment [12.3.29.10(A)] requires that “mixed income” dwellings be of a construction quality comparable to market-rate dwellings within the same development, the applicant’s draft Affordability Plan makes no such claim.
- Likewise, the applicant’s draft Affordability Plan does not indicate that “mixed income” units will be dispersed throughout the development as suggested in the proposed text amendment. Three of the studio units are reserved for those earning 60% of median income (18.8%) while only six of the two-bedroom units are so designated (13.9%). It is noted that none of the affordable units reserved for households or families with incomes at or below 60% of the median income are larger than 935sf. The Committee would like to see a more equitable initial distribution of the affordable units and a revised Schedule A reflecting this break-down.
- The applicant’s draft Affordability Plan indicates that the entity responsible for administering the Plan and ensuring compliance with its requirements is 15 Unquowa Road, LLC, whose managing member is Lee Forest. The Committee has significant concerns relative to the entity’s lack of experience in developing and managing a residential development of this size and in Mr. Forest’s ability to fulfill his obligations under the affordability plan. There is no point of contact provided, nor qualifications provided to assuage these concerns.
- There are no provisions for any of the units to be fully ADA compliant.
- We would like to see more explicit language in which the administrator provides notice of available units and as part of its affirmative marketing plan to the Office of Community & Economic Development and the Fairfield Housing Authority, among others.
- While the draft Affordability Plan includes provisions regarding a change of income or qualifying status of a resident, it does not explicitly state that in such event, the Administrator shall designate the next available unit as a mixed income unit in order to maintain the required percentage of affordable units in compliance with CGS 8-30g.

- While the Affordability Plan contains “sample” calculations, it is noted that fair market rents and income limits used are no longer valid, inasmuch as new HUD fair market rents took effect on 10/1/21 and new HUD income limits took effect on 4/18/22.
- The Committee would like to see additional language regarding annual compliance reporting, including references to the Administrator’s obligation to file an annual compliance report by January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year for the prior year; use a report that is substantially in compliance with that prescribed by the Town; and provide a certification accompanying the report attesting to its accuracy. The Committee would also like to see that the report include a description of any fair housing marketing efforts undertaken during the preceding year, with copies of advertisements or other notices as well as information on the dates and publications in which such notices appeared.
- While the Committee understands and appreciates the need for affordable housing and the relationship between density and affordability, the members have concerns regarding the scale and height of the proposed building structure relative to the surrounding properties.