

Town of Fairfield
Office of Community & Economic Development
Affordable Housing Committee
September 14, 2022

The Affordable Housing Committee of the Town of Fairfield held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, September 14, 2022 in the Second Floor Conference Room, Old Town Hall. The meeting was also available via Zoom.

PRESENT: Steve Grathwohl; Joanne Csonka; Janice Bouloubasis; Nina Velez; Urb Leimkuhler; on Zoom: Heather Dubrosky; Carol Martin, Executive Director, Fairfield Housing Authority

ALSO: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Grathwohl called the meeting to order at 7:03 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 by Ms. Bouloubasis and seconded by Mr. Leimkuhler to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of July 13, 2022. The motion was unanimously approved.

Update on Plan of Conservation and Development

Mr. Barnhart reported that FHI Studios has been retained by the TPZ Commission to aid in the development of the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). Among the issues to be considered are housing, economic development and open space. Mr. Barnhart will invite representatives of TPZ and FHI to attend the October AHC meeting. In preparation for this meeting, Mr. Barnhart will send information from the TPZ and any other relevant information to the Committee members.

Affordable Housing Plan:

All agreed that the primary goal of the plan was to achieve a moratorium.

Mr. Grathwohl distributed a Summary of the 2022 Affordable Housing Plan stating the goals, tier #1 and tier # 2 strategies and key supporting actions as well as unit goals for each strategy going forward. He asked the Committee members for suggestions as to how to accomplish the tier # 1 goals, particularly the 15% set aside requirement.

Mr. Barnhart asked the AHC to consider the cost to developers in establishing a set aside percentage and whether it would discourage new investment in affordable housing. Mr. Leimkuhler suggested putting a 'soft' number to some developers to get their input as to a reasonable number. Ms. Czonka noted that using 10% would never get Fairfield to the moratorium.

Mr. Barnhart suggested that areas for further investigation include zoning regulations for B and C zones (multi-family units allowed) and where lots and the neighborhood may accommodate such housing. Working further with Habitat for Humanity could aid in developing units in these areas. Another area for further study is examining parking requirements.

Ms. Czonka asked if there was any town property that might be usable for affordable housing. Mr. Leimkuhler noted that most of this is considered open space and has limitations for building. Ms. Czonka will investigate current foreclosures to see if these properties would be eligible.

Ms. Martin joined the conversation via Zoom. Mr. Grathwohl asked how the AHC could support the work of the Fairfield Housing Authority. Ms. Martin said that their issues were financing, finding sites and navigating the town's regulatory processes. She complimented the AHC on the 2022-2027 Affordable Housing Plan. Her suggestions include 1) support of local land use proposals; 2) attending public hearings related to affordable housing; 3) talk to others about the need for addressing this topic in town; 4) assist in finding potential sites and help in negotiations. Ms. Martin stressed the need for housing to be affordable and accessible.

Mr. Grathwohl mentioned the need for 'middle' housing. Ms. Martin spoke about the Housing Choice Voucher program administered by the FHA. There is a need for more landlords. Currently, the FHA administers 101 vouchers. By the end of the year they will be able to support a total of 110 vouchers. The biggest problem is the lack of supply. Mr. Grathwohl asked if it was practical to buy condos that come on the market. Ms. Martin replied that administrating separate loans for single units would not be possible. Another possibility she mentioned was to repurpose existing unused buildings.

Mr. Grathwohl suggested that committee members each look at several potential sites. Mr. Leimkuhler will develop a list and distribute it. Mr. Barnhart reminded Committee members to be aware of restrictions such as flood zones/plains.

Old Business and Updates

Mr. Barnhart provided the following updates:

- 15 Unquowa Road: application was denied by the TPZ but will likely be appealed
- Black Rock Turnpike: medical office across from Hi-Ho has been approved
- 78 Unquowa: completed; copy of the deed restriction has been filed
- Metro Center: ground breaking on first building will be held soon (12% affordable)
- Housing Trust Fund: balance is roughly \$500,000
- Parkview Commons: nothing new to report
- 244 Greenfield Street: an agreement was reached with the Board of Selectmen; the site is ready; all permits will be in place by the end of the year
- St. Emery's School: the size of the property for sale has been reduced, but the price has increased

ADU's: Mr. Leimkuhler mentioned that there had been some changes to the draft flyer; Ms. Bouloubasis suggested running a video about the program at the local Farmers' Market

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, October 12, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner