

**Town of Fairfield
Office of Community & Economic Development
Affordable Housing Committee
February 7, 2024**

The Affordable Housing Committee of the Town of Fairfield held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 in the Second Floor Conference Room of the Old Town Hall. The meeting was also available via Zoom.

PRESENT: Urb Leimkuhler; Bob Ellwanger; Steve Grathwohl; Janice Bouloubasis; Brian Vahey; Jacqueline Paige

ALSO: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community & Economic Development; Rene Dobos and Steve Gulick, Connecticut Housing Partners

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Leimkuhler called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Minutes

The minutes of the January 10, 2024 meeting were approved unanimously.

Guest Presentation: Rene Dobos and Steve Gulick, Connecticut Housing Partners

Ms. Dobos and Mr. Gulick described their organization as one that develops affordable housing in partnership with communities throughout the region. They build, manage and consult with other non-profits to provide homes for those who are unable to find accommodations in the current marketplace. Connecticut Housing Partners also helps towns secure approvals of projects, access state funds and maintain properties once built. They emphasized that they expect to hold their properties for the long term. Mr. Barnhart mentioned they have bid on development proposals in Fairfield and he encouraged them to continue to do so.

Payment in Lieu Regulation Amendment:

Committee members discussed the proposed text amendment that had been submitted to the Town Plan & Zoning Commission by Attorney Russo. Mr. Barnhart shared information on similar pay-in-lieu provisions in other Fairfield County towns. A motion was made, duly seconded and unanimously approved to authorize the chair to submit written comments to TPZ reiterating the points made in its August 9, 2019 letter, but suggesting a payment formula of 350% of the greater of the statewide or area median income.

Affordable Housing Plan: Discussion of Next Steps & Timeline

Mr. Leimkuhler reviewed priority strategies identified in the Affordable Housing Plan and discussed by the Committee, including:

- Reduce the threshold for inclusionary zoning to five or more units (from ten).
- The AHC will work with the P & Z to amend the Design Residence District (DRD) zoning regulations by employing a floating overlay approach as opportunities present themselves.
- Continue to support the Fairfield Housing Authority (FHA) wherever possible.
- Continue to aggressively pursue middle housing options to include discussion of zoning refinements with TPZ
- AHC will strongly support all efforts to increase DECD staff capacity in order to support this agenda.
- AHC will fine-tune guidelines for the Housing Trust Fund, with the intent of supporting the dual goals of achieving a moratorium and providing a wide range of housing options for residents.

Mr. Barnhart mentioned that he hoped to arrange a joint planning workshop with TPZ about many of these items.

Mr. Barnhart reminded all of the orientation and board retreat planned for Saturday, March 9th. Mr. Leimkuhler encouraged committee members to forward any topics for discussion at the meeting.

Old Business and Updates

Mr. Barnhart expects that the town will have enough points to apply for an initial moratorium by May or June of this year.

Mr. Barnhart reported that the Housing Trust Fund has a balance of \$638,478 in uncommitted funds.

Mr. Barnhart reported that he hopes to present the proposed development agreement with Habitat for Humanity for the Parkview Commons redevelopment to the Board of Selectmen in March.

St. Emery's School: Mr. Barnhart reiterated the Town's and Fairfield Housing Authority's interest in acquiring this parcel for affordable housing.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m. The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner