

**Town of Fairfield**  
**Office of Community & Economic Development**  
**Affordable Housing Committee**  
**March 8, 2023**

The Affordable Housing Committee of the Town of Fairfield held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room of Sullivan Independence Hall. The meeting was also available on Zoom.

PRESENT: Joanne Csonka; Steve Grathwohl; Urb Leimkuhler; Heather Dubrosky; Gwynne Alperovich

ALSO: Mark Barnhart, Director of Community and Economic Development

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Csonka called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

MINUTES: Consider & Act Upon the Minutes of February 8, 2023

Ms. Alperovich asked that the minutes include the suggestion that news from the AHC be included in the First Selectwoman's newsletter. The minutes of February 8, 2023, with this addition, were accepted unanimously.

#### ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. Csonka and Mr. Barnhart were pleased with the reception to the AHC Annual Report at the recent RTM meeting. Several members requested rental prices be included in future reports. A suggestion was made that the AHC investigate forming a 501(C)3 to facilitate the acceptance of private donations. Mr. Barnhart agreed to look into the feasibility of the AHC forming a 501(c)3.

Mr. Grathwohl asked if there were remaining ARPA funds that might be used for AHC or HTF projects. Mr. Barnhart mentioned that all funds had been committed, but that there may be some funds leftover eventually as some projects might not move forward or come in under budget. He cautioned that any such requests should be for a specific project or purpose.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

Mr. Leimkuhler provided an overview of the five goals that the AHC agreed to be actively pursued:

- (1) Work with P & Z to increase set aside requirements. Review parking regulations.
- (3) Support/cooperate with the Fairfield Housing Authority to create additional housing opportunities.
- (7) Work with the P & Z to develop more options on type/configuration of housing.
- (11) Develop guidelines for the HTF.
- (13) Increase/expand educational outreach.

Mr. Grathwohl will review the housing programs of other towns. Mr. Barnhart suggested that the AHC confer with some builders to assess the impact of expanding the set aside percentage given the current interest rate environment. Mr. Barnhart noted the Town's receipt of funds under the Connecticut Challenge Grant to help offset infrastructure costs. He noted that the state has adopted new guidelines in connection with these types of grant funding opportunities.

Mr. Leimkuhler spoke about the possible use of town owned property. He noted that very few parcels were suitable for new housing construction. Other land that might be feasible include the St. Emory's school (FHA is pursuing with the owner) and perhaps re-purposing large, underutilized commercial parking lots (Ms. Bouloubasis and Ms. Csonka will investigate).

Mr. Leimkuhler advised that he was planning to meet with Assistant Town Planner Harrigan to discuss the use of Zone B properties and parking lots. One of the objectives is to establish current parameters. Another is to evaluate examples of use from other communities. Ms. Csonka suggested writing letters to legislators to encourage them to be proactive in affordable housing. Mr. Leimkuhler mentioned that this is an effort that would best be initiated over the summer, i.e. between sessions.

Mr. Barnhart noted an upcoming workshop for the POCD on April 20, 2023. There was also mention of a workshop hosted by the Fairfield County Housing Alliance on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Barnhart stated that he will work with Ms. Velez on strengthening the guidelines for the Housing Trust Fund.

Mr. Barnhart suggested that the ground breaking for 244 Greenfield Street might be a good time to help publicize the work of the AHC and HTF. Several Commissioners offered to gather information from other non-profits to help draft a brochure on the HTF.

Mr. Leimkuhler suggested that we discuss the feasibility of creating a 501(C)3 at our April meeting. Mr. Barnhart asked if members could suggest an attorney who might offer services pro bono.

#### OLD BUSINESS & UPDATES

- Housing Trust Fund: the balance is \$832,996 with \$350,000 set aside for Parkview Commons.
- Parkview Commons: Mr. Barnhart is hopeful of acquiring property that is in foreclosure.
- 244 Greenfield Street: Fairfield has approved the ground lease. A Ground Breaking will be scheduled soon.
- St. Emory's School/Convent: Members were asked to contact any personal contacts to encourage this project to proceed under the FHA.

#### NEW BUSINESS

CDBG Funding: Mr. Barnhart listed funds available through this federal program as well as the Neighborhood Assistance Act that might help facilitate renovation and purchase of affordable housing.

Operation Hope: Mr. Barnhart updated the Committee on Operation Hope's search for a new location and possible use of town property at 488 Tunxis Hill.

Turner Armory: Mr. Barnhart said there has been little progress in acquiring this property from the US Army.

Berkeley Road Set Aside Development: the developer has filed an application to build 40 units of rental housing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, 2023.

Respectfully submitted, Gretchen Goethner