

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021 (via Zoom teleconference)

PRESENT: Dave Goldenberg (chair), Lori Mazzola, Sharon Coleman, Kevin Brown

ABSENT: Kent Rohrer, Sheryl Knapp

GUESTS: Krista Willett, Debra Franceschini-Gatje

The meeting was called to order at 7:05.

In Committee secretary Kent Rohrer's absence, guest Krista Willett agreed to take notes, to be forwarded to Dave to draft minutes.

Dave noted that he had been asked by the Planning & Zoning Commission to represent the Committee on a Plan of Conservation and Development implementation committee. Many town committees and organizations will be represented. The committee aims to track progress on PoCD action items. After a few monthly meetings, it will meet quarterly.

a. Affordable housing plan and grant

The \$11,000 grant to aid our development of an affordable housing plan. But the funds have been held up by a paperwork issue, which Dave has been working to correct. He said he has been working with Rudy and expect it to be sorted out soon. When the grant money comes in the next step is to write an RFP for hiring a consultant. Kevin Brown will work with Dave on the RFP, and they will coordinate with the first selectman, since it must be issued from his office.

Dave will send out links to tools and access to useful datasets. He also noted several interesting Webinars coming up:

1 pm Thursday: "Understanding Housing Needs in Your Community."

7 pm Thursday: Mtg to discuss Gilbert & Bennett property in Redding

1 pm Friday "The Future of Housing Mobility."

Debra Franceschini-Gatje noted that recorded webinars will be available and she will share with the Committee any links she has.

b. Ridgefield affordable housing overlay zone update (MADZ)

This item is on hold and may be incorporated into the affordable housing plan.

c. Housing for adults with disabilities

No update. (Cheryl was not in attendance.) Lori Mazzola noted that the sale of South Hall is pending. Information about the buyer is being withheld by St. Stephen's.

d. Prospect Ridge expansion

Dave has spoken several times with Paula in the Commissioner's Office about the status of our request for \$50,000 for the Prospect Ridge expansion. Dave has spoken with several planning firms and consultants to begin the process of identifying a vendor. Once the money is approved, the committee will develop an RFP, which will be processed through the first selectman's office.

e. Branchville TOD

Dave noted that the TOD provision was stripped from the Desegregate CT bill (SB 1024). However, the TOD proposal for Branchville, if implemented, would exceed the requirements that were in the bill. The committee discussed thinking about the entire corridor from Branchville Rd. to School St. in Georgetown. This would require cooperating with Wilton and Redding, and maybe Weston. As for sewer capacity, we're awaiting Redding's decision on what to do with the old Gilbert & Bennett property. It appears to be in their best interest to sublet some of their sewer capacity if the G&B project does not go through. If Redding declines sharing sewer capacity then there are other options...

1. Create small local sewer (package) plants
2. Tax increment financing (TIF). This is a zoning overlay the uses the anticipated tax revenue increase from an improvement to fund that improvement.
3. Pump the sewage uphill to the Ridgefield sewage plant. This would be very expensive. No calculations on this yet.

The best option is the Georgetown plant Redding owns and operates the Georgetown Sewage plant and hence is currently operating at a loss with underused capacity. We will have a better idea after Thursday's meeting in

Redding about what they want to do. Redding seems to be split between resurrecting the G&B project or knocking it down for soccer fields.

f. P&Z 8-30g compliance/retention

Whit Campbell (not present) has worked with P&Z on a database of deed restricted housing based on 8-30g. In terms of compliance, Karen Martin, Town Planner, reports that all owners and landlords have complied with her request to confirm income qualification of residents—with the exception of the Villages. Enforcement is up to P&Z.

g. Housing trust fund

Lori Mazzola has found a partial list of trust funds in the state.

Dave has created a spreadsheet of for gathering information about HTFs. Once we have all the info, we will create our proposal and take it to the Board of Selectmen

h. Habitat site

(Kent Rohrer not present). John Frey suggested an old schoolhouse on Old Branchville Rd which could be donated for adaptive reuse. It's currently used for little league storage. Kent has met with Rudy to visit the site and will report back.

i. Accessory units and middle housing

Dave and Kevin have developed a questionnaire for people who have received permits for accessory dwelling units since 2007 to ascertain how many have been constructed and how they are being used. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms. The committee discussed distribution. The committee agreed to printed distribution of the survey, with an online entry option. An option will be included for respondents to enter their names to be contacted for further interviews. Data entry will be divided among committee members.

j. FB and social media presence

Dave administers the Facebook page and said he could use a co-administrator. He has provided limited posts to this point.

k. "Ridgefield Talks Housing"

At 7pm on April 29, we will host a Q&A Webinar with Evonne Klein, former Darien first selectman and formerly Dan Malloy's Commissioner of Housing.

Darien and New Canaan are running similar series. This will be a pilot Webinar to be evaluated for continuation. Dave and Sharon Coleman will handle publicity.

I. Communications planning

A communications plan will be developed concurrently with the affordable housing plan.

M. Minutes

The minutes of the March meeting were amended to correct a reference to a town. They were approved as amended.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20.

Dave Goldenberg recording.