

## RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

March 22, 2023 – 7:00 PM

Town Hall – 400 Main Street, Ridgefield  
Small Conference Room, Lower Level

**PRESENT:** Dave Goldenberg (Chair), Kent Rohrer (Vice Chair), Kevin Brown, Whit Campbell, Sharon Coleman, Debra Franceschini-Gatje, Sheryl Knapp, Lori Mazzola, and Krista Willett.

**ABSENT:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM.

**1. Public Comment:** none

**2. New Business:**

- a) **Email correspondence:** Dave reiterated that all relevant email correspondence had been distributed to members.
- b) **Discussion about Proposal to Charter Revision Commission re: moving to P&Z.** The Charter Revision Committee generally meets every 4 years, and the process is currently underway. There were notes submitted to dissolve the RAHC, which cannot be done as the RAHC is not in the Charter. A second note had been submitted by Debra to put the RAHC under P&Z, but she indicated that it was retracted out of concern that it is an illegal Committee. Dave indicated that there is a provision in the town Charter that ad hoc committees can be appointed at any time, but it was agreed that if any questions remain regarding the legitimacy Committee, they should be addressed with Town Hall. Dave expressed his support for this proposal, as it would put the RAHC in the Charter to be reappointed, and also streamline the Committee's work by working together with P&Z on shared issues like land use. Several Committee members concurred. Kevin asked whether P&Z would have control over what would be in agenda items. Kent made a motion to support the concept of amending the Charter such that the Affordable Housing Committee would report to the Planning & Zoning Committee instead of the Board of Selectman, pending additional details; Sheryl seconded.
- c) **Other new business:** none

**3. Current Business:**

- a) **State feasibility study grant – site-determination process:** Dave had spoken to the Commissioner of Housing to request that the Prospect Ridge feasibility grant be expanded to explore other properties, and she had indicated verbally that the Committee must come up with a specific list of properties. After obtaining support from Committee members attending the 2/22 meeting, Dave spoke with Whit and Kevin, who had previously surveyed prospective properties for affordable housing. He asked Committee members if there was

additional interest. Debra asked if the Commissioner's response was stated in writing; Dave and Kent indicated that they would request that the grant be reworded when the specific properties were selected, prior to spending any money. Debra requested Dave get this conditional approval in writing; Dave indicated that he would, and it would be distributed electronically to Committee members.

- b) **Web presence – next steps.** Sharon reported that Debra has been working hard reviewing the information Sharon assembled. Debra expressed concern that the information be current and valid, and shared obstacles she is facing in confirming the validity. Committee members proposed that the information that has been validated be shared, even if it means omitting references to specific properties, and then the site and listings can be updated on an ongoing basis. Debra indicated that it was important that all available information be published, and committed to completing her review within the next month.
- c) **Press policy, other operational concerns:** Debra shared concerns regarding misstatements published in the *Ridgefield Press*, and proposed that statements made by the Committee be collectively composed and done in writing. Lori made a motion that no member of the Committee can speak to the press on behalf of the Committee unless it is agreed upon by the Committee, and that it be put in writing; Debra seconded it. Kent and Kevin indicated that it is not appropriate for the Committee to mandate on one another how they correspond to the press when speaking as an individual, and Kent proposed that the second part of the motion be omitted; Lori amended the motion accordingly. Kevin expressed that comments to the press also increase transparency to the public. Dave indicated that he always states clearly when he is speaking on his own behalf, and asked for clarification regarding what the Committee is requesting. Kevin offered an amended motion indicating that no member of the Committee can take a position on behalf of the Committee unless the position was agreed upon by the Committee; Debra seconded it. Dave made a motion that we table the motion until the Committee has a clear motion regarding what would be voted on; he then withdrew the motion when there was no second. Kevin amended his motion to state that no member of the Committee can speak to the press on behalf of the Committee; Debra seconded the motion. Krista moved to table the motion; Kevin seconded. Dave, Kristen, and Kevin voted in favor of Krista's motion; Lori, Debra, Sharon, Kent, Sheryl, and Whit opposed. Motion did not pass. The Committee voted on Kevin's proposal – Lori, Debra, Sharon, and Kent voted in favor; Dave, Whit, and Kristen opposed; Sheryl and Kevin abstained. Motion carries.

#### 4. Public Comment:

- a) **Christine Moore** (submitted letter to be read by Andrea Beebee): Thanked the Committee for its hard work, but proposed that the Committee be dissolved and absorbed by the Planning & Zoning Committee, which could decide to create a subgroup to handle affordable housing.
- b) **Andrea Beebee:** views the Affordable Housing Committee as an advisory committee. She expressed concerns about the press misquoting those making statements, and commended the Committee for coming up with a formal policy to address correspondence with the press.

- c) **Karyn Cerbone:** asked why the Ridgefield Housing Authority is not involved in creating and mandating a website. Kevin explained that the RHA is only responsible for the properties they manage but the Committee's purview is more broad.
  - d) **Kirk Carr:** Encouraged attendees to visit Desegregate Connecticut's website to read about their stance on pending bills, citing their support for the Fair Share bill which permits builders to construct within ½ mile of a train station without a public hearing.
5. **Review Previous Minutes:** Kent moved to formally accept the minutes for the 2/22/23 meeting; Sharon seconded. Dave, Kent, Sharon, Sheryl, and Krista voted in favor; Debra, Kevin, Whit, and Lori, who were not present at the meeting, abstained. Motion was approved.
  6. **Next meeting:** The next Regular meeting is scheduled for 04/26/2023.
  7. **Adjourn:** Sharon moved to adjourn; Debra seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9:11 PM.

Prepared by Sheryl Knapp, Secretary