

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Meeting minutes 6/3/2020

Ridgefield Town Hall

Members present via Zoom conference call: Dave Goldenberg, Kevin Brown, Kent Rohrer, Lori Mazzola, Sheryl Knapp. Guests: Krista Willet, Whit Campbell, Steve Zemo

Dave called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. Minutes of the May meeting were unanimously approved.

The committee welcomed Lori Mazzola and Sheryl Knapp, who were recently officially sworn in as committee members.

Grant application: Dave updated the committee on the recently submitted grant. The application has been accepted. 26 total grants were submitted and Dave believes our request for funding will be honored. Dave also reported that he spoke with Francisco Gomes of Fitzgerald Halliday Inc. about their availability for and interest in providing support for the project. Francisco is already working with at least one other community in the state.

Dave indicated he has been in contact with Christie Stewart from the Fairfield County Housing Alliance. This group will be providing both data and a process guide that should assist in our work on Homefront. Dave will participate in the effort to develop this assistance. Dave indicated that the potential development of the Halpin Lane property will be the subject of an upcoming meeting. Dave and Kent plan to attend this June 10th meeting.

Steve Zemo joined our meeting to discuss his views on the concept of an overlay zone that could be implemented by P&Z as an alternative to 8-30g. Steve's overall assessment was that the concept, while potentially attractive to developers, does not do enough to support affordable housing and could have unintended consequences. He suggested we complete our study and let the findings guide any specific proposals. He also recommended we engage with state government officials to directly address deficiencies in 8-30g. Specific examples would be to move to make units affordable in perpetuity vs the current 40 year limit and requiring that all units be ADA compliant. Steve also indicated that two of his proposed developments are currently not being pursued. He said this is due to the fact recent decreases to the allowed rental rates make these investment unaffordable. We also discussed future updates to the PODC when affordable housing analysis is completed. In summary, we agreed that while the currently defined MADZ is not viable, there is consensus on the committee that alternatives to 8-30g should continue to be considered.

We also questioned Steve about the impact of expiration of original deed restrictions. He said for his units, they remain below market rate even though restrictions have ended. He commented that concepts to maintain or increase existing affordable housing would need to consider how to keep landlords financially whole.

Ridgefield Responds. There is a proposal being considered that would expand and extend this idea. Ridgefield Social Services/Tony Phillips would administer. Lori suggested that we may be able to integrate this with the Housing Trust fund as a source of funds. We discussed the concept of including small business as eligible participants in addition to individual renters and homeowners.

Housing Trust Fund. Lori reported that she has received some information regarding the structure and approach used by Fairfield CT. They have successfully raised \$750K in two years. We agreed to have Lori invite a representative from Fairfield to a future meeting.

Housing for adults with disabilities: Sheryl reports that group homes remain challenged in the face of Covid-19. While State run facilities are required to remain open, many families are bringing family members home during the crisis.

Branchville TOD : No updates but Dave will contact Karen Martin to request an update.

8-30g compliance : No updates.

Bailey and Prospect building – No update – we will remove from future agendas

Habitat building site in Ridgefield. Kent reported that any properties Habitat would pursue in Ridgefield would need to be “improved” sites with easy access to sewer and water. Site development costs in excess of 45K make development unaffordable for a single family home. A lot in the future development on Halpin Lane is probably the best option.

Patriot Gardens: See earlier comments about June 10th meeting

With no additional old or new business, the meeting was called to close at 8:50pm. Next meeting 7/8/20 at 7pm.

Prepared by Kent Rohrer, Secretary