

RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

October 26, 2022 – 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, and Lori Mazzola

ABSENT: Sheryl Knapp, Krista Willett

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

1. Public Comment:

Michael Schmer read a prepared statement calling for Mr. Goldenberg's resignation as Chair and member of the Committee. According to Mr. Schmer, the basis for his request relates to Facebook messages in which Mr. Goldenberg allegedly made accusations of antisemitism. Mr. Goldenberg responded that the issue arises out of activity on his personal Facebook account and disagreed that his conduct was improper. Ms. Mazzola stated that Mr. Goldenberg's conduct reflects on the Committee. Mr. Campbell noted that Mr. Goldenberg had just recently been re-elected as Chair.

2. New Business:

a) Email Correspondence

Ms. Mazzola read a statement submitted to her by Andrea Beebe commenting on Mr. Goldenberg's Facebook activity, asking about the Committee's authority to implement the Affordable Housing Plan and its plans to do so. Ms. Beebe also asked about the Committee's relationship with the Ridgefield Housing Authority and term limits for committee members. Further to Ms. Beebe's email, Ms. Franceschini-Gatje raised the question of terms and term limits. Mr. Goldenberg explained that the Committee is reappointed annually.

3. Current Business:

a) Review State Funding; Letter to Department of Housing

Mr. Goldenberg reported that he and Mr. Rohrer had spoken with Rudy Marconi regarding the Prospect Ridge expansion. Mr. Rohrer reported that they had discussed the possibility of asking the State to expand the existing grant to permit study of feasibility of developing affordable housing in Ridgefield more generally, rather than only at the Prospect Ridge location. Discussion followed regarding this possibility. The Committee also discussed development of the Town-owned property at the corner of Prospect Ridge and Halpin Lane and the work that John Loehr is undertaking to develop a possible strategic approach to that property in conjunction with Ability

Beyond. The Committee agreed to invite Mr. Loehr to the next Committee meeting to present on this subject.

Mr. Rohrer made a motion to ask the Board of Selectmen to request that the State permit expansion of the scope of the grant to include locations other than Prospect Ridge. Ms. Mazzola seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

Ms. Franceschini-Gatje moved to table Mr. Rohrer's motion. The motion to table failed 2-5. Ms. Franceschini-Gatje and Mr. Campbell voted in favor. The remaining Committee members voted against.

Mr. Rohrer's motion was subsequently modified to propose that Mr. Marconi contact the State to determine whether the Department of Housing will be receptive to a request to expand the scope of the grant. If the Department of Housing would be receptive, then a request can be made formally to the Board of Selectmen and then the Department of Housing. With this modification, the motion passed unanimously.

Web Presence

The Committee discussed the web page under development and Ms. Coleman's revised content for the page. Ms. Coleman invited members of the committee to provide comments to her directly.

b) Affordable Housing Plan

Mr. Goldenberg reported the following:

1. The Planning & Zoning Commission is developing an inclusionary zoning regulation.
2. The Committee will be on the agenda at an upcoming meeting of the Planning & Zoning Commission to discuss the Housing Trust Fund. The meeting date is TBD.
3. Mr. Marconi has informed Mr. Goldenberg that infrastructure improvements in Branchville are underway, including sidewalks. The key to developing "middle housing" in Branchville is sewage capacity. Ridgefield must determine what capacity it would seek from the Redding treatment plant. Mr. Marconi would like to bring the State, DEEP into discussions on this issue and a task force of stakeholders, including the Committee, the Water Pollution Control Commission, and Branchville landowners, among others, should be assembled to address this issue.
4. The Committee will speak with the State regarding the possibility of developing a program that will allow Ridgefield residents who own Accessory Dwelling Units to deed restrict those units as affordable but only until the property is sold or transferred.

4. Public Comment:

a) Kirk Carr (62 Prospect Ridge)

Mr. Carr wanted to know how he could obtain a copy of the Prospect Ridge grant. He was informed that the First Selectmen's office should be able to provide a copy. Mr. Carr commented generally concerning the need for affordable housing in Ridgefield.

b) Greg Kabakasalian (2 Washington Street):

Mr. Kabakasalian commented regarding the online comments concerning alleged antisemitism, the code of conduct, and a possible ethics complaint.

c) Colette Kabakasalian (2 Washington Street):

Ms. Kabakasalian commented that Mr. Goldenberg should resign.

d) Jefferson Guthrie (Address Not Provided):

Mr. Guthrie commented that the online comments discussed were unnecessary.

5. Review Previous Minutes: The Committee decided to review the September meeting minutes at the next Committee meeting.

6. Next meeting: The next Regular meeting is scheduled for November 16, 2022.

7. Adjourn: Mr. Rohrer moved to adjourn; Mr. Brown seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9:03PM.