

## RIDGEFIELD AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes: 3/3/2021

Members Present via Zoom conference Call: Dave Goldenberg, Kent Rohrer, Kevin Brown, Lori Mazzola, Sheryl Knapp. Guests: Whit Campbell, Debra Franceschini-Gatje, Sharon Coleman, Krista Willet, Bob Hebert (selectman). Guest speaker: Francisco Gomes

Meeting called to order 6:35pm

### AGENDA

#### Ongoing projects

a. Affordable housing plan – Dave introduced Francisco Gomes. Dave described recent 11K grant from state. Francisco led development of the Branchville TOD plan. He is a planner with FHI Studio, a company of 50 people. Francisco can assist in development of plan. Leveraging both funds and committee experience. He can gather existing data, providing guidance, but not lead entire process (that would take \$25K). Decision and policy would be done by RAHC. Francisco can advise, counsel and package the plan. Dave suggested Francisco could help in moderating public sessions given his experience and credentials. Second area is translating data into recommendations. Dave believes we on the committee can write and assemble with guidance. Francisco will write a scope of work to present to us. Francisco suggests online surveys in advance of any public meetings. He indicated he is skilled in effectively addressing concerns of people who are skeptical of affordable housing. Estimated timeline – 4 to 6 mos. Schedule, Milestones, Public involvement plan, Stakeholder support. He would run the larger meetings; we could run the smaller focus groups. He suggests using surveys to educate people as well as to get input. After Francisco left the call Dave asked Bob Hebert if we need multiple bids. Bob believes we have some liberties given small size of grant. Dave did suggest one other vendor (Glenn from Planametrics) and believes we should seek advice from Becky in P&Z.

b. Ridgefield affordable housing overlay zone update (MADZ) - No update; on hold

c. Housing for adults with disabilities – No updates from Dave. Sheryl mentioned Abilis is working on project in Darien. Dave said he would contact Abilis regarding possible interest in South Hall.

d. Prospect Ridge expansion. Dave has heard back from the Commissioner of Housing's staff and indicated they were working on the details of funding our request for \$50k to conduct feasibility study. Debra asked questions about sewer capacity. Kent indicated feasibility study would address this concern and many others.

e. Branchville TOD. Recent article in Ridgefield Press noted that Rudy did approach Redding first selectman Julia Pemberton about acquiring some of their excess sewer capacity, but there are many open questions on timing and is not ready to give an answer. Dave noted that there are items in the TOD proposal that can be done without increased sewage capacity. Per Kevin, Town of Redding should now be the owner and he will seek publicly available information.

f. P&Z 8-30g compliance/retention. Whit reported that Karen Martin, P&Z's Assistant Planner, sent out the annual Affordability Compliance Affidavits in January; 7 of 11 came back, and she will be following

up with 4 that didn't respond. Dave indicated that 3 units at the Village at Ridgefield were apparently rented out of compliance with 8-30g.

g. Housing trust fund. Dave and Lori have been working on it. In order to move forward with the fund, we need to know more about experiences others have had, including what has worked and not worked. Lori expressed that this is essentially a tax, and concurred that more information would be required. Most of the information we currently have is from Fairfield, Darien and New Canaan. Lori and Dave will continue to move this forward

h. Habitat site. Kent reported that a town owned property is under investigation. Also, work is in process with NAFCAR (Fairfield County Realtors association) and Ridgefield Clergy Association.

i. Accessory units. Lori reported that P & Z's original proposal to increase ADUs to 2 bedrooms and 1200 square feet has been modified to reflect a sliding scale; any home under 3,000 sq feet, based on town records, cannot build ADU's exceeding the current 900 square feet, while larger properties can go as high as 1200 square feet. Two-bedroom units will be permitted, regardless of the size.

2. Social media. Facebook page is live, and there have been a few visitors. Dave has posted today's agenda, and plans to post articles. Dave proposed that we stick with Facebook for now. Sharon recommended that a link be put on the town website, and Debra that we promote the page with the Ridgefield Patch.

3. "Ridgefield Talks Housing" - Dave discussed the Darien Talks podcast, and plans for the "Ridgefield Talks Housing" podcast. He wants it to be informational, as opposed to a discussion of the pros and cons of affordable housing. Deb mentioned that the Darien Talks housing meeting is tomorrow at 7 PM; Dave to distribute information to RAC members.

4. Communications planning: Dave indicated that we need a good communication plan on the Affordable Housing Plan. Sharon volunteered to be involved if she joins the RAHC.

Kevin moved to approve the minutes and Krista seconded; the minutes were unanimously approved.

Kevin moved to adjourn the meeting and Lori seconded; meeting was adjourned at 7:57.

Prepared by Kent Rohrer

Committee Secretary